

LAURENCE DERVAUX



VISITOR'S GUIDE

Nous,
huit milliards d'humains,
moins vingt-sept,
plus septante,
le temps de lire ce titre.

MERCI FACTEUR ! MAIL ART #6

JANELAS + AGATHE ERISTOV GENGIS KHAN

(25+50) + (25-50) =
50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE DÉTOUR GALLERY

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Salle Pierre Dupont
Grande Halle - Entresol

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(25+50) + (25-50) =

50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE DÉTOUR GALLERY

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L'ART CONTENT/COMPTANT POUR RIEN...!?

An educational proposal from the BPS22
mediation team

LAURENCE DERVAUX

Nous,
huit milliards d'humains,
moins vingt-sept,
plus septante,
le temps de lire ce titre.

Us,
eight billion humans,
minus twenty-seven,
plus seventy,
the time taken to read this title.

Curator: Pierre-Olivier Rollin

Born in Tournai in 1962, Laurence Dervaux graduated from the Higher School of Plastic and Visual Arts of the Tournai Academy of Fine Arts (l'École Supérieure des Arts plastiques et visuels de l'Académie des Beaux-arts de Tournai). Since 2009 she has been chair of the painting programme, and pictorial and three-dimensional research at the same institution. Her work can be seen in several public and private collections, both national and international. Since 1982, she has taken part in numerous group and solo exhibitions, both in Belgium and abroad.

APPROACH

Laurence Dervaux's work is all about the human body, seeking to express the complexity of its mechanisms, as well as its beauty and fragility. She explains: *"My work deals with the body's amazing physiological mechanisms, vital processes such as the circulatory system and body fluids such as water, which makes up 65% of our body. It is about the incredible beauty of bodily functions, of their fragility and their finitude. But, more than that, it is also about what is necessary to sustain life, for example, nutrition, as in the pieces made using coloured rice or those relating to water, the vital beverage."*¹ For about forty years, Laurence Dervaux has been exploring the body from different angles, creating a shift between what we immediately see and what we gradually perceive. The human body is never shown head-on; instead, it is implied by signs and shapes that remind us that it is alive and therefore liable to die.

¹ Interview between Christine Vuegen and Laurence Dervaux, Tournai, 2023.

THE BEGINNINGS

Trained as an engraver, Laurence Dervaux has been interested, from her earliest works, in representing the human body, and the female body in particular. *“I wanted to work with a common denominator for everyone viewing the work, for each human”*, she continued. *“In the end, the body was the obvious choice”*². Her training as an engraver left her with a taste for work in the physical sense of the word, as well as an active, sensitive and meticulous involvement in the creative process.

In the early 1990’s, Laurence Dervaux created a number of pieces using edible produce (rice, wheat, bread, lentils, sugar). Once removed from their intended use and transformed into vast exhibits, these sculptural compositions act as “vanitas”, a sub-category of still life. The term which is derived from the Latin evokes the futile, fleeting and ephemeral nature of existence. In the early 17th century, vanitas established itself as an independent pictorial genre, expressing the inexorable nature of death. Laurence Dervaux reinterprets this theme in a resolutely contemporary way, evoking the brevity of existence and the inevitable passage of time.

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

This thirst for the use of vital food elements gradually led her to “enter” the body. *“I ended up working inside the body and, inevitably, to explore the vital mechanisms, the organs; so many subjects that overlap my work on food, because these vital processes allow life to be sustained”*³. Laurence Dervaux treats the interiority and future of the body as “raw material”. Essentially, the artist’s creations respond to a compelling need to unveil what is hidden beneath the surface, beyond the epidermal layer, plunging into the very heart of the human body. It is therefore hardly surprising, that in the early 2000s, drawings of muscles began to appear, seducing us with their formal and chromatic qualities whilst, at the same time, betraying a detailed knowledge of human anatomy.

During this period, she incorporated human fragments into her work: first, milk teeth – a reference to ingestion and childhood – strands of hair, nails, and bone fragments. Body fluids also captured her attention. As the defining signature of life and death, blood was the first fluid explored by the artist, first in video and then in the form of structures made up of glassware that evoked the precariousness and fragility of the body.

² Interview between Nancy Casielles and Laurence Dervaux, Tournai, 2022.

³ *Ibidem*

ATTRACTION/REPULSION

In Laurence Dervaux's work, beauty constantly acts as a sensory trap. "*For me, beauty is a tool,*" she explains. "*It's the tool with which I am going to attract a visitor*"⁴. The artist effectively transforms basic materials into an arrangement of shapes, often minimalist but always visually appealing. She repeatedly plays with the fragile boundary between attraction and repulsion: each sculptural and chromatic arrangement offers a seductive aesthetic vision before revealing what it represents. Often, through the work's title, a new meaning is added to what we see. It is therefore an interpretative shift that brings us face to face with our physiological mechanisms, with what goes on inside our bodies.

The art historian and critic Jean Clair has likened this experience of gradual personal confrontation, which the artist always induces, to the mythological figure of Medusa, not only as a powerful force of repulsion and death but also of fascination and grace. "*The confrontation with Medusa*", he writes, "*offers the pleasure of a pure vision, in which we see ourselves without knowing what we are seeing; this pleasure is, however, quickly replaced by the horror of being seen: we discover ourselves in seeing that 'we' are only 'that'*"⁵. In other words, we are suddenly aware that we are nothing more than a mortal body, made of flesh and blood, inevitably destined to die, the sudden clarity of which freezes and hypnotises us. In other words: we become petrified.

⁴ *Ibidem*

⁵ CLAIR Jean, *Medusa. Contribution à une anthropologie des arts du visuel*, Paris, Gallimard, 1989, p. 59-60.

SALLE PIERRE DUPONT

LA QUANTITÉ D'EAU CONTENUE DANS DIX-HUIT CORPS HUMAINS

THE AMOUNT OF WATER CONTAINED IN EIGHTEEN HUMAN

2023

Transparent glass containers, coloured liquids, mirrors, metallic thread, fabric

Production: BPS22 Hainaut Province Museum of Art

In this exhibit made up of glassware filled with water and coloured liquids, each set of containers, bound together by a cord of blood-red capillary tissue, symbolises a human body. By means of capillary action, the liquids are transferred, drop by drop, from larger to smaller containers. The flow of drops produces waves whose movements are reflected on the floor and the walls, filling the exhibition space. Some of the reflections emulate organic shapes, cells, and bony structures. Water, the main constituent of the human body, is destined to evaporate over the course of the exhibition. The insignificance of the reflections illustrates this passage to a transient state, emulating the inescapable destiny of the body.

SALLE PIERRE DUPONT

1st FLOOR

BE PASSING

2010

Videos with sound (2 x 00'08" on a loop)

Production: 7th Busan Biennale (South Korea)

Two videos are projected, facing each other. In one, a vase full of red liquid crosses the screen from top to bottom. In the other, a vase shatters on the floor and the liquid seeps out. In a nutshell, this video diptych illustrates the passage from life to death. The sound, artificially slowed down, is that of glass breaking. It mimics the beating of a heart.

LE RÉSEAU SANGUIN HUMAIN MESURE DEUX FOIS ET DEMI LE TOUR DE LA TERRE
*THE HUMAN VASCULAR SYSTEM MEASURES TWO AND A HALF TIMES THE
CIRCUMFERENCE OF THE EARTH*

2005

Lichens, red colouring

This title is a direct reference to the complexity of the network concealed within the human body, as the piece is made up of delicate segments of red-stained lichen. These organisms, suggesting the arborescence of capillary vessels, express the precision and fragility of the vascular system. The association between the title of this piece of work and the organism underlines the essential link between human beings and the Earth and its limited resources.

LA MER THE SEA

2006

Video

In this video, seaweed, clinging to a rock, echoes the movement of the waves. The aquatic environment, a symbol of fertility, acts as a reminder of the original environment of humanity and, more generally, of all life forms. Maintaining a hypnotic and mysterious relationship with us, the toing and froing of the seaweed gives the piece a clearly erotic dimension. The undulating movement of the plants invites the viewer to move closer to the piece, to get a better feel for it and to fantasise about it.

FLUIDES HUMAINS BODY FLUIDS

2006-2007

Blown glass, coloured liquids

Private collections and artist's own collection

In this exhibit, the organic shapes in blown glass contain coloured liquids that evoke various body fluids. The glass envelope prevents any possibility of evaporation and fixes these vital fluids in time and space. In this way, the alleged timelessness of art is contrasted with the transience of existence. Wandering around these delicate elements, we feel the fragility of our organism while at the same time being confronted with our own components.

GRANDE HALLE

CHAQUE SCULPTURE REPRÉSENTE LA QUANTITÉ DE SANG CONTENUE DANS UN CORPS HUMAIN ADULTE OU ENFANT

*EACH SCULPTURE REPRESENTS THE AMOUNT OF BLOOD CONTAINED
IN THE BODY OF ONE HUMAN ADULT OR CHILD*

2023

Transparent blown glass, red liquid, dyed fabric

Private collections and artist's own collection

This vast exhibit which fills the centre of the Great Hall, consists of twenty-six glass drops whose shape has been determined by the amount of blood they are intended to contain. Each drop is held in place by a spiral of red fabric strips, a simulation of flayed flesh that appears to be decaying. Punctuating the space with coloured notes, the drops are suspended at varying heights, suggesting that they could fall and burst. The body is presented held in suspension; its lifeline liable to break at any moment.

BOLS REMPLIS DE TERRE ROUGE, NOIRE, BLANCHE, JAUNE

BOWLS FILLED WITH RED, BLACK, WHITE, AND YELLOW EARTH

2009

Porcelain, earth

The bowls are placed on tables as an explicit reference to still life paintings of "a laid table". Acting as vanitas, they demonstrate the vital need for sustenance, while the cracked earth they contain suggests drought and the depletion of natural resources. The colours in the bowls echo human diversity. The exhibit, taken as a whole, reminds us of the ties that bind human beings to their natural environment.

HUMAN LIQUID, A DROP OF BLOOD

2004

Video (approximately 4'00" each drop)

Production: Notélé (Television company from Hainaut Occidental)

Collection of the Charleroi Museum of Fine Art

This video, made up of fifty sequential shots, shows the progression of a drop of blood as it is gradually diluted in water. Each drop has been taken from a different person and develops a unique undulating movement before gradually disappearing, making way for the next one. As she does on a regular basis, the artist works with a particular figure of speech: she identifies one element of the human body, in this case the blood, to stimulate a reflection on the human being in general.

URNES URNS

2009

Acrylic on glass

Coproduction: La Fondation d'entreprise Hermès, Paris and le Centre d'art contemporain Les Brasseurs, Liège

Collection of the Charleroi Museum of Fine Art

A black shape which appears to be a human-sized burial urn is painted on three plates of transparent glass on which our image is reflected. Each urn represents the singularity of each human being. We look at ourselves full of life, in front of this inert object, confronted head on, with our destiny. The work acts as a contemporary vanitas, inviting reflection on the inexorability of death.

RIZ - COLORANTS COMESTIBLES RICE - EDIBLE FOOD COLOURING

2003

Rice, edible food colouring

The grains of rice used in this exhibit have been dyed using vivid edible colours. Although visually transformed, the grains have not lost any nutritional value. Each pile of coloured rice is painstakingly presented in a display case that shapes it like a transparent mould. The glass display case delineates the space used; its geometric precision contrasts with the random disposition of the grains of rice reminiscent of the historical conflict between minimalism (geometric) and formalism.

SPHINCTER

2003

Ink and graphite on paper

Once again, the artist plays with the temporalities of perception of her work: the shape drawn is initially perceived in an abstract way. The title of the work then reveals the hypertrophied representation of a sphincter, a ring-shaped muscle which contracts to close off a duct; the anal sphincter being the most well-known although there are others in the body (mouth, eye, etc.) The succession of delicate lines graphically reproduces the strength of the muscle. The body is treated as a physiological element, often considered as "low" or "trivial". This devaluation is, however, counteracted by the refinement and beauty of the drawing.

FOUGÈRE - EAU CONTENUE DANS LES MAINS *FERN - WATER IN THE HANDS*

2006

Fern, transparent resin

A fern, symbol of resilience and immortality due to its ability to survive parched, is placed next to a transparent resin shape representing the water that can be held in two hands cupped together. The shape of this plant mimics the arborescence of blood vessels or the ramifications of waterways, suggesting a homomorphic link between the constituent parts of the universe. Water, transformed into a hard material, is placed near this organic being, like an urgent call to pay attention to the Earth's environment which is continually deteriorating.

DES PERSONNES BOBINENT DU FIL ROUGE AUTOUR D'OSSEMENTS HUMAINS

PEOPLE WINDING RED THREAD AROUND HUMAN BONES

2011

Videos (from 0'45" to 25'30" on a loop)

The videos show the hands of people with different origins who, obsessively, wind red thread around fragments of bone. Gradually, the thread becomes flesh. The procedural nature of this restorative gesture gives away a desire to protect and restore life. Sometimes, however, the gesture proves fruitless and produces no bulge. What is more, some of the bones are gradually stripped bare. Reminiscent of the process of spinning, the work makes a reference to the Moirai, the three personifications of destiny in Greek mythology (the Fates in Roman mythology), each of whom devoted themselves to the meticulous task of weaving, unwinding and cutting the thread of each human life.

CRÂNES RECOUVERTS DE TERRE ROUGE, NOIRE, BLANCHE, JAUNE

SKULLS COVERED IN RED, BLACK, WHITE, AND YELLOW EARTH

2009

Plaster, earth, human bones

Private collections and artist's own collection.

Production: le Centre d'art contemporain Les Brasseurs, Liège

Casts of human skulls are covered in layers of earth. Depending on the number of layers applied, the initial shape may become a face or an ovoid ball of clay. As it dries, the earth on the surface of the sculptures cracks. Some of them have been worked to reduce or eliminate the cracks, symbolically resisting the drying process. The sculptures, each containing a small fragment of skull, are presented at eye level. Evoking the past and the future, they engage the visitor's body in the hidden in-between - that is the present, life.

OÙ EST-IL ? WHERE IS IT?

2023

Sound

As you wander through the exhibition, you may be struck by the chirping of a sparrow. Has an egg hatched inside the museum? This bird song could be interpreted as a warning. But it is, above all, a reminder of the presence of life that follows hatching, a symbol of the renewal of the cycle of life and of freedom. Will the bird take flight?

ENTRESOL

CRÂNE - ŒUF SKULL - EGG

2002

Human bone, gold leaf, ostrich egg, mirrors

A skull, covered in gold leaf on the concave side, and an egg, the size of a four-month-old human foetus, are placed side by side on separate mirrors, their reflections clouding the viewer's perception. These two ovoid objects make explicit reference to motherhood and death, that is to the cycle of life. The birth of the world from an egg is an idea common to many civilisations where it is a representation of demiurgic power, giving birth to heaven and earth. Their surfaces are streaked with barely perceptible meanderings, as though they conceal a secret map of the universe.

MERCI FACTEUR ! MAIL ART #6

Janelas

A project by Marc Buchy and Tiago de Abreu Pinto

Janelas ("windows" in Portuguese) is an initiative of the artist Marc Buchy (Metz, 1988) and the curator and writer Tiago de Abreu Pinto (Salvador de Bahia, 1984), launched during the pandemic. It involved sending a series of window envelopes, to more than 70 artists of 25 different nationalities living in 17 countries. Each envelope contained an invitation to take part in a Mail art project, respecting clear instructions: to use the inside of the envelope so that the only space for displaying the artistic creation was the "window". This process prompted artists to experiment with the materiality, spatiality, visibility, humour, political dimension and dissidence of this type of work.

With the participation of: Ignasi ABALLÍ (Spain), Constanza ALARCÓN TENNEN (Chile), Albert ALLGAIER (Austria), Rodrigo ARTEAGA (Chile), ASSUME VIVID ASTRO FOCUS - AVAF (Brazil), Julia AURORA GUZMÁN (Dominican Republic), Shuzo AZUCHI GULLIVER (Japan), Paula BAEZA PAILAMILLA (Chile), Béatrice BALCOU (France), Juan CASTILLO (Chile), Louis CLAIS (France), Claude CLOSKY (France), Keren CYTTER (Israël), Lenora DE BARROS (Brazil), DELIGHT LAB (Chile), DENICOLAI & PROVOOST (Belgium), Paz ERRÁZURIZ (Chili), Petra FERIANCOVÁ (Slovakia), Ángela FERRARI (Argentina), Pietro FORTUNA (Italy), Marcius GALAN (Brazil), Juliette GEORGE (France), Steve GIASSON (Quebec), Marie GLAIZE (France), Dalila GONÇALVES (Portugal), Carla GRUNAUER (Argentina), Shuruq HARB (Palestine), Pablo HELGUERA (Mexico), IKHÉA@SERVICES (France), Luciana JANAQUI (Peru), Narelle JUBELIN (Austria), Eleni KAMMA (Greece), Yazan KHALILI (Palestine), Stefan KLEIN (Germany), Perrine LACROIX (France), colectivo LASTESIS (Chile), Matthieu LAURETTE (France), Pierre LEGUILLON (France), Hanne LIPPARD (Norway), Annaïk LOU PITELOUD (Switzerland), Adrien LUCCA (France), Ruggero MAGGI (Italy), Fernando MARQUES PENTEADO (Brazil), Noé MARTÍNEZ (Mexico), Jacqueline MESMAEKER (Belgium), Marianne MISPELAËRE (France), Rokko MIYOSHI (Japan), Guillermo MORA (Spain), Óscar MUÑOZ (Columbia), neither (unspecified),

Irma NAME (France), Ana NAVAS (Equator), Yuki OKUMURA (Japan), Bernardo OYARZÚN (Chile), Aurélie PETREL (France), Niels POIZ (Belgium), Pilar QUINTE-ROS (Chile), Camila ROCHA (Brazil), Kurt RYSLAVY (Austria), Matthieu SALADIN (France), Liv SCHULMAN (Argentina), SELF-LUMINOUS SOCIETY (Belgium), María SOSA (Mexico), Frans VAN LENT (The Netherlands), Mavi VELOSO (Brazil), Puck VERKADE (The Netherlands), Els VERMANG (Belgium), Pep VIDAL (Spain), Oriol VILANOVA (Spain), Ivana VOLLARO (Argentina), Elsa WERTH (France).

Agathe Eristov Gengis Khan

Correspondence with Guylaine Liétaert (2014-2015)

French artist, Agathe Eristov Gengis Khan (Neuilly-sur-Seine, 1948 - Paris, 2015) has developed Mail art throughout her career, alongside painting, drawing and collage as well as teaching. It is worth noting that she also kept up a prolific correspondence with personalities such as Gilbert Lascault and Agnès Varda. During the last two years of her life, she maintained regular exchanges with one of her Belgian friends, Guylaine Liétaert, who had previously studied the artist's wealth of correspondence with another Belgian friend, Monique Claes.

It is Agathe Eristov Gengis Khan's heartfelt letters to Guylaine Liétaert that are shown in the exhibition; they share her struggle with illness, while expressing her joy at creating them along with her desire to share her passion for an art of exchange that helps to brighten everyday life.

(25+50) + (25-50) = 50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE DÉTOUR GALLERY

The general heading of events organised to mark the 50th anniversary of the Dé-tour gallery in Jambes (Belgium), is presented in an enigmatic way: “(25+50) + (25-50) = 50th anniversary of the Dé-tour gallery.” Yet the principle is simple: 25 artists aged 50 or over, who have exhibited at the gallery in recent years, invited 25 artists under the age of 50 to take part in a collective exhibition at the gallery, from 11.10 to 10.11.2023.

The BPS22 is marking this anniversary by presenting all the invitation cards for the exhibitions held there over the last ten years. In all, a total of 72 solo and group exhibitions, showcasing over a hundred artists with a wide range of approaches.

PETIT MUSÉE

L'art content/comptant pour rien...!?

Art contempt with/counts for nothing...!?

An educational proposal
from the BPS22 mediation team

“We don’t understand anything! It’s ugly! A five-year-old child could do it! Contemporary art is violent and provocative”... so many misconceptions that we frequently hear and that the Petit Musée (Small Museum) counters through a selection of works from the collections of the Province of Hainaut and the BPS22.

Together with the Little Visitor’s Guide, the BPS22 mediation team’s initiative invites young visitors to engage in a dialogue with the works of art. It also opens up avenues of discussion between the generations and helps everyone understand that contemporary art is everyone’s business!

Artists: Pierre ALECHINSKY, Stephan BALLEUX, Gabriel BELGEONNE, Marcel BERLANGER, Jacques CHARLIER, Roman CIESLEWICZ, Jérôme CONSIDERANT, Edith DEKYNDT, Margaret HARRISON, Serge LHERMITTE, François LIENARD, Marcel MARIEN, Mimmo ROTELLA, Dominique THIRION, Gert et Uwe TOBIAS.

Museum open Tuesday - Sunday, 10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Closed on Mondays, 24, 25, 31.12 and 01.01, and while exhibitions are being installed.

PRICES:

€6 / senior citizens: €4 / students and jobseekers: €3 / under 12 years old: free.

Groups of 10 minimum: €4 per person.

Guides: €50 or €60 (weekends) per 15-person group maximum.

Free for schools and associations with prior booking (tour and workshop).

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MUSÉE D'ART
DE LA PROVINCE
DE HAINAUT

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