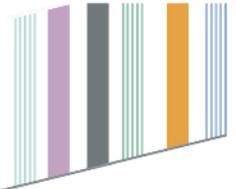


Galerie Mario Mazzoli



*presences*

**CÈLESTE BOURSIER-MOUGENOT**

curated by Mark Gisbourne



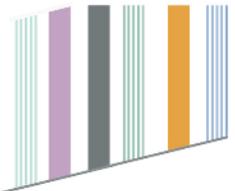
**September 7<sup>th</sup> – November 2<sup>nd</sup> 2013**

**Opening on Friday September 6<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm**

Galerie Mario Mazzoli is honoured to present the first German solo exhibition of French artist, Céleste Boursier-Mougenot (Nice, 1961).

The art installations of Boursier-Mougenot are investigations into sound-space and presence, often using altered perceptual states of affective suspension and lateral comprehension. While trained formally as a composer-musician he worked ten years in composition within the contemporary dance world. He has become subsequently a major international artist who has developed a uniquely individual view of the relationship and possibilities that pertain between sound and objects. In using domestic materials, sound equipment, and musical instruments as objects (things in the world), as well as video loops, he has created sound installations that he calls his *corps sonore* (sonic body) works, which lead the viewer towards a unique set of individual sensory installation experiences.

The suspension of meaning through a liminality (threshold) of expectation is of particular relevance to understanding Boursier-Mougenot, since he intends his objects to always remain substantially what they are as objects—even as their former utilitarian functions have been stripped away, or redirected to other creative ends and purposes. The works are abstract in that they extract and remove (suspend) our familiar spatial associations, and/or alter our common identification with the objects chosen turning



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them into undefined abstract presences. And as a consequence the installations invariably instigate unpredictable chance encounters and unresolved feelings of emotional indeterminacy, paradoxical in that each project installation is pre-planned and meticulously conceived by the artist. We experience an indeterminate outcome for an approach that appears at first to be conceptually pre-determined.

There is a particularly French intellectual quality to the artist's sculptural and soundscape works, no doubt indebted to some extent to the philosophical ideas of Merleau-Ponty, whose philosophy has an affinity with the phenomenological realities of bodily and lived sensory experience. At the same time there are further suggestions of a familiarity with Bachelard in Boursier-Mougenot's concern with phenomena and psychical elements—earth, air, fire, and water. Each of these in different ways have been subjected to investigation by Boursier-Mougenot, and have been used to produce powerful project works. The artist also has a strong affinity with nature, working with living animals and birds, evident in the aviary of sparrows producing unpredictable sounds on piano wires in his *d'ici à ici* (from here to here), and *action dogs* (1995), where audio equipment was fitted to dogs whose random wanderings through the city streets were recorded. A return to birds, in these later cases using finches *from here to ear* (2000 and 2007), where in the last case a birdhouse-aviary has pedestalled working electric guitars, and the finches land randomly on the instruments creating spontaneous and unpredictable sounds. It is also not without a certain precedent for a French artist, since it obviously calls to mind Olivier Messiaen's famous compositions based on the recording of birdsong.

Many works by Boursier-Mougenot have to be considered as richly textured but continuously unfolding intellectual projects, densely saturated ideas that have already been returned to and expanded upon, and conceivably will be again in the future. Similarly, an untitled work that began as crockery (bowls, cups and glasses) floating in a paddling pool (1999-2001) has evolved into an extremely sophisticated environmental museum project, where each installation re-embodies the work in the context of a new venue and reading. Not surprisingly analogies of a shared sensibility have been drawn between Boursier-Mougenot's interactive floating bowl sound installation, and Monet's famous lily pad paintings at Giverny. The sound, object, and spatial acoustic-works of this creative artist, while they begin as seminal ideas, continue over time to open up for the viewer a completely new sensory relationship between sound and space.

A past Marcel Duchamp Prize finalist, Céleste Boursier-Mougenot's work has been presented in major exhibitions by leading museums and galleries internationally, including solo exhibitions at the Barbican Centre (London), Hangar Bicocca (Milan), La Maison Rouge (Paris), Pinacoteca do Estado (Sao Paulo), FRAC (Reims), Chagall Museum (Nice), and group exhibitions including *Art & Music: Search for New Synesthesia*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, 2012; *French Art Today*, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul, 2011; *My Paris – Collection Antoine De Galbert / The French scene*, me Collectors Room, Berlin, 2011; *21st Century: Art in the First Decade*, Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, 2010; and the 3rd Moscow Biennale, Moscow, 2009.

Mark Gisbourne