

**Critique
d'art**

Critique d'art

Actualité internationale de la littérature critique sur l'art
contemporain

50 | Printemps/été 2018
CRITIQUE D'ART 50

Elisabeth Ballet

Jean-Marc Huitorel

Translator: Simon Pleasance



Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/critiquedart/29327>

DOI: 10.4000/critiquedart.29327

ISBN: 2265-9404

ISSN: 2265-9404

Publisher

Groupeement d'intérêt scientifique (GIS) Archives de la critique d'art

Printed version

Date of publication: 25 May 2018

Number of pages: 93-95

ISBN: 1246-8258

ISSN: 1246-8258

Electronic reference

Jean-Marc Huitorel, « *Elisabeth Ballet* », *Critique d'art* [Online], 50 | Printemps/été 2018, Online since 25 May 2019, connection on 05 June 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/critiquedart/29327> ;

DOI : 10.4000/critiquedart.29327

This text was automatically generated on 5 June 2019.

EN

Elisabeth Ballet

Jean-Marc Huitorel

Translation : Simon Pleasance



ELISABETH BALLE, 2018 © HENRI FOUCAULT, WITH COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

- 1 Any critical portrait of Elisabeth ballet will inevitably assume the look of a family portrait, to such an extent, ever since her early exhibitions (1985, Villa Médicis), has this artist seen her oeuvre analyzed and commented upon by faithful pens, in catalogues, reviews and magazines alike. Among the writings which have accompanied her career, let us mention the numerous articles by Catherine Millet and Catherine Francblin in *Art press*, the magazine which has most regularly championed her work, as well as those by

Elisabeth Lebovici and Hervé Gauville in *Libération*, a piece by Michel Gauthier (Carré d'art in Nîmes, 2002, republished in the recent MAC VAL catalogue, Vitry, 2017¹), and the essay by Jean-Pierre Criqui, about the 1990 exhibition at the Domaine de Kerguéhennec,² already underscoring the linguistic nature of this oeuvre, and its “phrasing” which paces and organizes the arrangement of her recent MAC VAL retrospective. Then there are pieces by Eric Troncy and Philippe-Alain Michaud. And not forgetting that great assembly of writers, of yesterday and today, with which her work resounds. Among so many others: Henry David Thoreau (the diary), William Faulkner (a certain passage from *Light in August*) and, closer to her, her friends Gaëlle Obiégly and Bertrand Schefer. When all is said and done, however, the most numerous and the most precise writings about Elisabeth Ballet's work are—her own: those notices which she writes about each and every piece. Readers may refer in particular to the publications produced with the graphic designers M/M (BCHN, City of Paris Museum of Modern Art, 1997; *Night Roofline*, Pau & Ibos: Le Parvis; Thiers: le Creux de l'Enfer, 1999), as well as with Syndicat (*Tout en un plus trois* at the MAC VAL, 2017), all turning these texts into graphic objects, on the borderline of work. No oeuvre is more wrongfully immediate and classifiable than Elisabeth Ballet's. The abstract and post-Minimalist sculpture through which we slightly hastily identify her (the word ‘baroque’ would sometimes be very suitable), her simple forms and her recognizable materials, the paths she develops in space (a fascination with roads) and the forms of architecture which bar access to them (enclosures and borders), and her interplays of scale (in the sense of both object and proportions), none of these prevent the intrusion of the world of experience, quite to the contrary. Are Elisabeth Ballet's spare pieces (sculptures, drawings, films, sound works) formalist? They are rather vehicles giving access to reality, including when “the impossible is reality”, to borrow Jacques Lacan's words. The reality that the artist is trying to see actually turns out to be extremely demanding and intangible. The paths she invents usually reject the visitor's step and force him to have recourse just to the way he looks at things (“In sculpture, one sees everything. I want people to see everything, but at a single glance”). She looks for this reality, as we have said, through forms and materials, but just as much through written language (each piece has a title, some of them being made of words). Words and developed forms are so many interfaces which Michel Gauthier describes on a formal level in terms of frontier and limit, and which Elisabeth Lebovici, borrowing from the psychoanalyst Didier Anzieu the term/concept of “Moi-Peau” [Skin-Ego],³ re-situates at the heart of sensory understanding, making Elisabeth Ballet's sculpture, much more than a rigorous arrangement, nothing less than an experience of the world.

NOTES

1. Gauthier, Michel. “De la relativité des places / On the Relativity of Places”, *Elisabeth Ballet : tout en un plus trois*, Vitry-sur-Seine : MAC VAL, 2017, p. 251-266

2. Criqui, Jean-Pierre. “Translations”, *Elisabeth Ballet* (19 May-24 June 1990), Bignan : Domaine de Kerguéhennec, 1990, n. p.

3. Lebovici, Elisabeth. "La Pièce manquante / Missing Piece", *Elisabeth Ballet : tout en un plus trois*, *Op. cit.*, p. 267