

Art dialogues with architecture at la maison rouge this summer, with four exhibitions running from June 1st to September 16th. *Pavillon Seroussi, architectures de collectionneur* presents projects for a private architectural commission. To echo this, the foundation has invited three artists - Patrick van Caekenbergh, Felice Varini and Flavio Favelli – whose work is, in its own way, a reflection on architecture.

patrick van caeckenbergh

les bicoques (a provisional inventory of small architectures from 1982 to 2007)

For his first retrospective in Paris, Patrick van Caekenbergh (1960, Aalst, Belgium) invites us into a very special "garden."

A gate in the wrought-iron fence - the boundary of this "garden" - opens onto a succession of object-sculptures, models and collages, created over the past twenty-five years. This domesticated nature, where the artist's private world unfolds, suggests intimacy (the secret garden) as much as universality (the garden of Genesis).

Patrick van Caekenbergh's work forms a "personal mythology", informed by his fascination with allegories, fables, stories, and with taxonomy, particularly in natural science. The infinitely small and the infinitely large, microcosm and macrocosm, the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms are part of an encyclopaedic attempt to encompass human nature. And yet, as *Le Puits Sceptique* reminds us (from the French proverb *la vérité est au fond du puits*, truth is at the bottom of the well), Patrick van Caekenbergh by no means seeks to establish a scientific truth. Scepticism and dreaming replace the quest for certainty.

Alongside the exhibition title, visitors discover two sacred hearts above the inscription *Les Jardins Clos*. This piece makes reference to the retables found in fifteenth-century Flemish béguinages, where women (Béguines) not under vows lived in religious communities devoted to prayer and good works.

These retables, sometimes several metres long, led into a flower garden surrounded by a low fence and dominated by statues of Mary (patron saint of the Béguines) and the saints. These casts were mass-produced in Mechelen.

Patrick van Caekenbergh's assemblages recreate the "home-made" spirit of the Béguines' retables, which were a patchwork of colourful fabric and paper flowers, pilgrims' badges and religious images.

The first object, immediately on entering the exhibition, is a pedestal supporting glass bell jars, stacked one inside the other like Russian dolls. Normally these jars would be used to protect and display items in a cabinet of curiosities; here they have nothing to show but their own transparent cavity. Next to them is an image of an imposing rose window, created for Reims Cathedral. Patrick van Caekenbergh has positioned the jars to echo the form of the window. In one corner of the image stands a tiny figure of himself in a dunce's cap: the over-ambitious artist made to stand in the corner.

This piece, *Les Oubliettes*, forms an important prelude to the other objects. These two architectural spaces filled with light, "emptiness", silence, and both with a protective function, invite visitors to empty their mind and leave it free to wander through the trail of works in the exhibition.

To the right, *L'atome de bulles de savon (autoportrait)* shows the artist blowing soap bubbles that join together in a constellation, a metaphor for a fragile, witty and derisive work.

Patrick van Caekenbergh has made his home and his studio, which he calls "the cigar box", in Sint-Kornelis-Horebeke, a Flemish village well away from cities and the contemporary art world. This is where he collects, classifies, assembles, writes and creates. This is where he has found the "happy tranquillity" that bathes the two swallows, nuzzled together in the drawing *Stil Geluk* that overlooks the room.

Creation is never-ending in this domestic space, where art and life are indissociable. Like certain animals, Patrick van Caekenbergh invites us to hibernate and let sleep wash over us, leaving the body free to function and "discover the luxury of solitary invention", as he writes in the note that accompanies *Le Trou de Souris*.

Back in 1979, while still a student at Ghent Fine Arts, Patrick van Caekenbergh imagined *Living Box*, a space that would be both a place for his creativity and an extension of it.

This ramshackle shelter of panels and curtains was Patrick van Caekenbergh's home from 1980 to 1984, having assumed the status of artwork in 1982. With a structure that can be dismantled, transported and reassembled at will, *Living Box* suggests mobility within a sedentary habitat.

Through its conception, and the fact that Patrick de Caekenbergh lived in it for four years, *Living Box* recalls the tortoises, snails, shells and other animals that carry their home on their back.

La Coquille is an interpretation of the nautilus, a cephalopod found in Renaissance cabinets of curiosity. Here it becomes a mobile habitat, a kind of pram (the work's other title) with giant handles which contains all the provisions and kitchen utensils (pans, teapot, plates, cutlery, glasses, eggcups, whisk, etc.) necessary for life on the road, in Patrick van Caekenbergh's eyes.

Nearby, *La Tortue* holds in its shell a tiny figure of the artist, naked, busy pounding something in a mortar... perhaps the mushrooms that surround him.

Painted on the roof of his turtle home, a map of the constellations connects him with the universe and makes him a part of the great cosmic order. Patrick van Caekenbergh sees Man as a "domestic animal", driven by instinct but, through domestication, opens to knowledge.

In 1990, Patrick van Caekenbergh began to accumulate pieces of skin which he cut out of porn magazines. The 5,000-plus "samples" that make up this *Collection de Peaux* are spread around the room, enveloping the works in the first part of the exhibition. These thousands of images represent as many anonymous and distinct bodies.

Through this meticulous cutting and classification, Patrick van Caekenbergh has succeeded in individualising each body, and in doing so has broken the reification process that is typical of pornographic images.

At the far end of the room, *L'Homme Anatomique* shows six monkeys parodying scientists. They form a circle against a background of flesh, surrounded by a halo of skin samples.

Opposite this collage, gods kneel in prayer on top of church collecting-boxes, wrapped in a choirboy's surplice.

La Couronne, Les Dieux Suppliants turns the idea of worship on its head. Here, the gods of different religions join together to celebrate Man, at the risk of collapsing in a heap should one of them abandon the congregation.

A few metres away stands *Le Paravent*.

Inside, tables are set out in preparation for a meal. On several occasions during the exhibition*, Patrick van Caekenbergh invites the public to share a homemade soup, a metaphor for knowledge and a "mental" food that nourishes and which we digest. The tables will only be cleared in time for the next soup, the "aftermath" remaining as a reminder of the meal shared.

Next to this, a table, tins, jars, plates and cutlery have been assembled into a motionless horse.

Le Cheval originates from a story which Patrick van Caekenbergh relates in a letter to his beloved. A cowboy he met at a conference had set out to tour Belgium in a horse-drawn wooden shack, mounted on wheels. By the end of the journey, he had filled the shack to bursting with food and tableware which he intended taking home as a souvenir. However, on reaching the border Customs officers told him he couldn't take both the house and the horse with him. And so the cowboy chose to leave the horse behind and create another one using some of the objects he had collected along the way.

While condemned to a life of immobility, the horse's shape suggests a form of mobility. This precarious and rebuildable structure becomes a sort of metaphoric double for *Living Box*, as Marie-Ange Brayer observes in *Abracadabra* (Palais des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles, CCC de Tours, 1992).

Patrick van Caekenbergh has filled the second part of the exhibition with six models in glass cases. Together they form a sort of "design bureau" for the conception and development of his projects.

Displayed alongside handwritten texts and dictionary-style illustrations, these scale models of larger works are seen here in their relationship to a vast network of knowledge that tends towards encyclopaedism.

This encyclopaedism resurfaces in *Le Clavier* with its classification of objects à la *Bouvard and Pécuchet*.

This little wooden house is in fact an alignment of drawers, each of which contains images, cut-out and classified by subject: anatomy, flags, road signs, famous people etc. In the same way an illustrated dictionary might, this rigorous presentation of knowledge prompts us to muse on so many different worlds.

The final stage in this itinerary is *Le Dais (le Ciel est à la portée de tous)*.

For its first outing in 2001, this long strip of blue fabric was carried through the streets of Sint-Kornelis-Horebeke by the oldest villagers, who held it over the village children to create a protective canopy and a link between them and the sky.

Hung from the ceiling, *Le Dais* invites visitors to follow in the wake of this procession but without taking part in the ritual, now suspended.

Visitors pass under this canopy and through the gate that marks the end of their journey into Patrick van Caekenbergh's fantasy world.

*Patrick van Caekenbergh will join the public inside *Le Paravent* to share a soup that he will prepare:

Velouté of garden vegetables with lobster

- June 28th at 8.30pm

- July 1st at 1pm

- July 5th at 7pm

- September 13th at 7pm

Places are limited and must be reserved by writing to:

info@lamaisonrouge.org

solo shows (selection)

2007 Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature, Paris (permanent collection)

2005 *Les Adoratoires*, Galerie in Situ, Paris

Atlas des idéations – Les jardins clos, Musée d'Art Contemporain, Nîmes (catalogue)

2003 *Les historiettes naturelles*, FRAC Provinces-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Marseille (catalogue)

2002 *Les Nébuleuses*, Galerie In Situ, Paris

2001 *Le Dais – Le ciel à la portée de tous*, Château d'Oiron, France

Stil Geluk. Een keuze uit het werk 1980-2001, Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht

2000 *De Anatomische Les - The Anatomy Lesson*, Kabinet Overholland in het Stedelijk, Amsterdam

Stil Geluk, Zeno X Gallery, Antwerp

flavio favelli

bureau

"Remembrance, what wilt thou with me? [...]"

Paul Verlaine, *Nevermore, Poèmes Saturniens*.

This summer, la maison rouge invites the Italian artist Flavio Favelli to take its café-restaurant outdoors into the patio.

Working regularly in architectural spaces, and reappropriating objects to produce seemingly functional works, he has created items of furniture for practical use on numerous occasions.

His installation for la maison rouge comprises five units that provide seating for twenty people, in a decor of wrought-iron separations, tables and chairs.

Bureau permutates the function of two spaces: the offices of la maison rouge, a private space, and the café terrace, a public space where diners become part of the exhibition for other visitors.

Created from found, restored and reassembled architectonic elements – wooden cornices, marble slabs, wrought-iron balustrades, mirrors, carpets and chairs – Flavio Favelli's sculptures are always intimate with the exhibition space, seemingly emerging from another world: a world of dreams, of his dreams which he wants to share. Intimately related to childhood and his personal history, Flavio Favelli's installations are heavy with pent-up emotion and the sensations born of memories. These are familiar objects. Objects we have already seen in old houses, churches or on flea markets and which, transformed by the artist, take on a new life.

Colours, forms and materials are subtly altered then juxtaposed in unexpected and elegant ways.

Old wrought-iron balustrades are painted pearl-grey; glass dishware is incorporated into chandeliers; imposing tables and chairs are painted with black lacquer then, an important detail, covered with black rubber whose raw, mat texture suggests skin.

The observer behind the glass and the visitor seated at the table feel a subtle melancholy fill the space.

Describing this installation, Flavio Favelli writes:

"*Bureau* is a fleeting vision, a flash. It's *déjà vu*.

It's a memory of a personal situation, a set of images...

hotels, canteens, cafeterias, restaurants, receptions...

psychological images and situations are superimposed...

a green streak.

Bureau is a mental interior."

Flavio Favelli was born in Florence, Italy, in 1967. He lives and works in Savigno, near Bologna.

solo shows (selection)

2006 *Balcony Hall*, Hilger Contemporary Gallery, Vienna

2005 *Rosé Royal*, Projectspace 176, London

Prima Sala d'Aspetto, Musée Villa Croce, Genoa

Vestibolo d'Aspetto, Project Room, Centre d'Art Pecci, Prato

Vestibule, Siège de l'ANAS, S. Croce, Venice

Stanza Restauro, Galleria Fabjbasaglia, Rimini

group shows (selection)

2007 *Ambient Tour* (curated by F. Bonami), Fondazione Sandretto, Turin

Good Morning Babilonia, Marella Gallery, Beijing

Mobili, Nosadella due, Bologna

Paesaggio con rovine, Quarter Relocated, Turin

2006 *Giardino*, (curated by L. Hegyi), PAN, Naples

2005 *Bologna Contemporanea*, GAM, Bologna

Domicile, (curated by L. Hegyi), Musée d'Art Moderne, Saint-Etienne

felice varini *quatorze triangles*

Felice Varini (1952, Locarno, Switzerland) has created his work in the "salle haute", overlooking the space reserved for *Pavillon Seroussi, architectures de collectionneur*.

While the architects for the Seroussi Pavilion propose a space to house contemporary art, Felice Varini takes an existing structure – an exhibition space at la maison rouge – and makes it his workspace.

"I start from an actual situation to construct my painting. Reality is never altered, erased or modified, it interests and seduces me in all its complexity. I work 'here and now'." Felice Varini.

Since moving to Paris in 1978, Felice Varini has explored various architectural spaces: urban space at Le Théâtre de l'Odéon in Paris in 2003 (*Sept droites pour cinq triangles*); private space in homes and corporations, as with *Rectangle orange évidé par cinq disques via le passage* for the Peugeot head office on Avenue de la Grande Armée in Paris in 2002; museum space, such as the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris in 1989 and more recently, in 2006, the Musée Bourdelle where his project worked around the sculptures in the museum's collection.

Felice Varini begins each project with an analysis of the setting (its architecture, materials, history and function) in which his painting will evolve. His installation takes shape around a vantage point from which it must be read, and which defines its origin within the space. The painted form is an anamorphosis which becomes coherent only when viewed from this point, which corresponds to the artist's eye-level (162 cm). From anywhere else, the lines lose their continuity and spread through the space as a multitude of points. The work is the sum of the infinite perceptions the spectator can have of it.

For his work at la maison rouge, Felice Varini has painted fourteen red triangles, joined at the base and stretching towards the ceiling.

Before identifying a precise form, visitors walk over bands of red paint that run across the floor to spill over onto the walls, beams and guardrails.

Only after crossing the threshold into the "salle haute", bathed in white light, do visitors locate the vantage point from which the fourteen triangles become coherent. Here, the immaculate floor contrasts with the red bands that run along the walls, highlighting their uneven surface.

When the perfectly rectilinear triangles finally appear, it is impossible to contain them all within our field of vision. The movement of the lines through space - overflowing into the neighbouring room and reaching into the corners of the "salle haute" - prompts visitors to cast their gaze along the form; a form that cannot be captured by a static approach.

Felice Varini, projects and exhibitions in 2007

Suite de triangles, Port de Saint-Nazaire, Saint-Nazaire

Three ellipses for three locks, Cardiff Bay barrage, Cardiff

Huit rectangles et quatre disques dans le rectangle, Musée des Beaux-Arts d'Arras

The Osaka Art Kaleidoscope, Osaka

Paroi orange éclatée, Filiale Gallery, Berlin

pavillon seroussi
architectures de collectionneur

curator: Elias Guenoun

scenography

concept: Nicolas Simon and Elias Guenoun

assistant: Anne-Sophie Delaunay

Since its creation, la maison rouge has reflected on questions and issues surrounding the private collection. Now the foundation welcomes an architectural commission to build a house for a collector. Natalie Seroussi has commissioned six agencies to submit projects for a pavilion that will contain her collection of contemporary art. These six projects are shown at la maison rouge until September 9th.

A panel of specialists in architecture will select the winning project on the day before the exhibition preview.

The pavilion, when built, will add to a remarkable architectural group developed by André Bloc (1896-1966) in Meudon, where the Seroussi family lives. This ensemble comprises a vast residence-studio (built in 1949-50) in which André Bloc lived until his death, and the two enigmatic *Sculptures-habitacles* (1964 and 1966).

This reference to André Bloc, and the experimental architecture of which he was both the defender and symbol, guided Natalie Seroussi in the choice of agencies. They are biothing; EZCT Architecture & Design Research; Gramazio & Köhler; DORA Design Office for Research and Architecture; IJP - George L. Legendre, and Xefirotarch. In a show of great audacity for a private commission, she has called on young agencies, giving them the opportunity to move from research to application. The six chosen teams have conceived their projects using forms generated by computational processes. Indeed, the past fifteen years have seen a profound transformation in architectural production. The transition from basic computer graphics to intensive recourse to computer-assisted processes (programming and specialist software) represents more than just the modernisation of representational tools. It has led to the conception of models whose complexity goes far beyond that which the human brain could ever engender. Most importantly it gives rise to a new paradigm in the design logic. Whereas before there was a clear distinction between the design and production stages, information technology has made it possible to simultaneously consider the different architectural parameters as interconnected elements, and for everyone, the entire length of the architectural chain, to work from the same information matrix.

To quote Elias Guenoun in the exhibition catalogue: "Architecture today uses computational processes to generate forms. These structurally-coded forms are then passed on to the next links in the chain, which are the engineer and producer. At the end of the chain, digital-command tools do no more than "identically" materialise the architect's conceptual intentions. In other words, the quality gap between the conceived object and the produced object no longer exists, as both now share the same nature and are generated using the same language."

The commission and the projects

Specifications for the commission required that the projects dialogue not only with the existing architectural pieces (André Bloc's property was classed a historic monument in 1983) but also engage with the issues surrounding private collections. Each project must imagine the interaction between the daily life of the pavilion's residents and that of the works it contains (exhibiting and managing them). It must define spaces capable of adapting to the various media used in contemporary art (painting, sculpture, video, photography, installation), while considering the singular perspective of the collector with respect to his or her collection; a very different perspective to that of a museum environment.

The project by IJP - **George L. Legendre** takes the form of periodic mathematical functions which determine the dimensions, form and nature of the spaces. Informed by this basic mathematical function (periodicity), the geometry of the building is extremely legible in appearance but in reality highly complex and unusual.

Xefirotarch / Hernan Diaz Alonzo has developed its project as a series of formal manipulations. Each form is highly technical yet also results from a romantic approach to digital design and computational processes that calls on intuition, imagination and sensation.

EZCT Architecture & Design Research / Philippe Morel, Felix Agid, Jelle Feringa have reconsidered the question of naturalism – the incorporation of natural elements into architecture – to conceive their project. The presence of ornamentation at every level of the building (decoration and structure) suggests the kind of organic architecture advocated by Frank Lloyd Wright.

Gramazio & Köhler / Fabio Gramazio, Matthias Köhler have conceived a single-storey glass house enclosing a heart of brick. This masonry core of curvilinear brick walls constitutes a complex spatial device. An industrial robot lays each brick to animate the wall with irregular curves and sections, sometimes transparent, sometimes solid, sometimes expressive and at others calm.

The project by **DORA (Design Office for Research and Architecture) / Peter Macapia** is built around the minimum geometrical object: the point. A "set of rules by which a set of points randomly placed in a space begin to coordinate and network into a specific organization" defines a liveable space and a global structure.

biothing / Alisa Andrasek has developed its project on the model of electromagnetic systems with their points of attraction and repulsion. These points are defined by the variable field conditions (the lie of the land, the *Tour-habitacle*, vegetation, etc.). The interior forms a maze where the complex interconnection of living space and exhibition space blurs the boundaries with the exterior.

While very different in appearance, all six projects delve more deeply into emerging and experimental approaches, and reveal the new issues surrounding architecture in the digital era. They should be seen not as the sign of a new school but as illustrating the heterogeneous nature of an emerging system of architectural production. The diversity of techniques developed in these projects alongside the very different forms proposed bear witness to a new order within which architecture could soon evolve.

André Bloc and the *Sculptures-habitacles*

In the basement space, a selection of documents and models present research by André Bloc whose personality and work left its mark, both literally and figuratively, on the site where the Seroussi Pavilion will be built. An engineer by trade, painter, sculptor, architect and founder, in 1930, of the review *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, André Bloc is a key figure for modern architecture and a defender of experimental constructions. Advocating a conciliation of "the art of the engineer, of the builder, of the artist and of the architect" in the wake of Neo-Plasticism, he applied these principles to the construction of his residence-studio in Meudon, just outside Paris. In the 1960s, in the garden of his home, he built the *Sculptures-habitacles* that would crystallise his ideas on the "free-form" synthesis of architecture and sculpture. Three models are presented here.

Pavillon Seroussi, a catalogue in French and English, (126 pages, colour, €28) is published by Éditions HYG.

summer programme

for the *Pavillon Seroussi* exhibition

june 2nd at 4pm

visit of the exhibition with its curator, Elias Guenoun

june 28th at 7pm

Radical architectures: form, action and computation

lecture by Marie-Ange Brayer,

director of the FRAC Centre, Orléans, artistic director of ArchiLab

Where does the current state of research by architects using the latest digital technologies stand in relation to the last European "vanguard" of the late 1960s (Archigram, Coop Himmelblau, Superstudio, etc) who overturned the notions of "project" and "form" in architecture?

in the vestibule

june 1st to july 1st

Benjamin Swaim (born 1970, lives and works in Paris) presents three series of drawings: *Le Sphinx* (2006), *Forty Guns* (2004-2006), *David et Goliath* (2005).

thursday June 14th at 7pm

Benjamin Swaim will sign his book at la maison rouge's bookstore, Bookstorming, 10bis bd de la Bastille, 75012 Paris.

july 4th to august 26th

details to come

august 29th to september 16th

Philippe Thomassin

in the suite

june 16th to september 2nd

La suite des Innocents by Sarkis

la maison rouge

president: Antoine de Galbert

director: Paula Aisemberg

exhibitions coordinator: Noëlig Le Roux

production: Sylvain Sorgato

installation: Steve Almarines, Gregory Bourges, Alexandre Barthes, Nicolas Guiet, Nicolas Polowski, Aurélien Porte, Frédéric Ray, Benjamin Swaim, Arthur Toqué

visitor coordinator: Stéphanie Molinard

speakers: Virginie Bobin and Ana-Maria Cifuentes (interns)

communication coordinator: Claire Schillinger,

assisted by Charline Guibert

assistant: Stéphanie Dias

reception: Charline Guibert, Anthony Saba

press relations: Claudine Colin Communication

acknowledgements

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opening days and times

- wednesday to sunday 11am to 7pm

- late-night thursday until 9pm

- guided visit, free on presentation of the entry ticket, saturday and sunday at 4pm

- the exhibition spaces are accessible to visitors with restricted mobility.

admission and passes

- full price: €6.50

- concessions: €4.50 (13-18 years, students, full-time artists, and over-60s).

- free: under-13s, the unemployed, companions of disabled visitors, members of ICOM and les amis de la maison rouge.

- annual pass (full price): €16

- annual pass (concessions): €12

free and unlimited admission to the exhibitions, free or reduced rate admission to related events.

- lecture and visit: €75 plus admission (pre-booking required)

partners

- I Guzzini Illuminazione, the architects for the Seroussi Pavilion are staying at Hôtel Sofitel Paris-Bercy, Dena Foundation, Téléràma, Paris-art.com, Théâtre de l'Odéon, Chèques Culture.

- la maison rouge is part of the TRAM- Ile de France network.

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