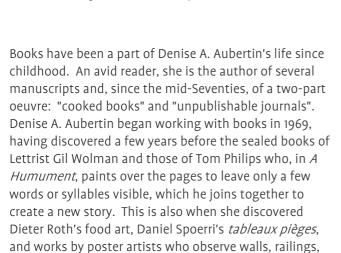
la maison rouge - fondation antoine de galbert - from June 8th 2006 to September 24th 2006

les livres cuits de denise a. aubertin

Initially,

"The cooked books belong to the category of books which cannot be read, books whose content, "an absolute medium for thoughts and knowledge", radiate a magical force.

I coat the books with a flour-based edible paste, add other nonperishable ingredients from the kitchen until I reach an interesting level of quality then bake them in the oven, closely surveying them as I do. Each cooked book is a specific composition. The uncontrollable factors of cooking make each one unique." Denise A. Aubertin



Denise A. Aubertin experimented with various approaches. "Closed books with their pages stuck together... sometimes forced open months later causing bizarre rips, pages, sentences, words overlapping... Sculpted, carved books... Books thrown into hamster cages... Books with transformed covers... Books taken along on trips that have retained traces of the places visited..." (Denise A. Aubertin)

posters and signs to develop a new form of writing.

In 1974, continuing a process of detournement and recreation, she produced her first "cooked books", most of which are paperbacks she has read and enjoyed. Some are more rare editions donated by authors, collectors, gallery-owners or friends. Depending on what the book's format, cover, title or content inspires, she concocts a specific recipe from Rousselot glue, flour, semolina, spices or sugar. Buckwheat flour for Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, Madras turmeric for Lévi-Strauss' *Tristes Tropiques*, chocolate for Ambrose Bierce's *Fantastic Fables*. She then "paints" this mixture onto the book's different surfaces, leaving some parts uncovered: a block



of colour, a title, the author's name or fragments of words. She then adds herbs, rice, chilis, candied fruit, red berries or pepper, rarely associating several different kinds of ingredient. A constellation of red lentils for Kawabata's *Thousand Cranes*, strips of ham for Balzac or Zola, cherry stalks for Cocteau. Denise A. Aubertin then subjects the book to the oven's heat: a violent gesture with heavy implications which, in return, transforms each of the treated books into a lasting object. Once cooked, the book is no longer ultimately perishable but forever preserved. Some "cooked books" are over thirty years old. Thus sealed, it becomes "(a) book which cannot be read whose content radiates a magical force." (Denise A. Aubertin).

In her "unpublishable journals", Denise A. Aubertin develops a form of writing akin to a rebus. Each hard-cover journal is composed of several printed pages (generally newspaper) on which she assembles a collage of photos, press clippings, and her own writing, fragmented and jumbled together, stained with wine, coffee and other remnants of her presence. "Political and social issues are grafted onto my present, the weather that day, my love life and my thoughts, written down and scattered word by word. The reader must go the distance, reading bit by bit following the four coloured lines. I mix the good with the bad. I tell it all in one go." (Denise A. Aubertin).

A group of "unpublishable journals" is shown at Galerie Lara Vincy (Paris).

bibliography

Dominique Truco, Denise A. Aubertin, « Livres cuits » et « Journaux impubliables», Les arts du goût, 2003. Michel Servière, *Denise A. Aubertin*, Galerie J. Mercuri, 1994.



passage au noir nicolas darrot

Nicolas Darrot (born 1972 in Le Havre, France) continues the cycle of events created especially for la maison rouge and its patio, an open-air space under climatic influence. Nicolas Darrot, who is fascinated by the relationship between living creatures and machines, is a kind of artist-sorcerer. He transforms insects into chimera, gives the power of speech to hunting trophies, creates automatons which come to life when a visitor approaches. The world of Nicolas Darrot stimulates the imagination on several levels: that of myth and fable but also in the equally vast realm fed by technological advances and scientific discovery.

Nicolas Darrot has taken his project beyond the limits of what was originally asked of him, creating a spectacular device that fills the patio and the heart of the foundation, the "red house".

A white, air-filled probe encircles the house. A flock of larger-than-life crows attached to their perches begin to caw and flutter when the probe comes near them. This encounter takes place in the patio in what resembles a courtship ritual. The event recurs in an endless cycle which the spectator can take in at leisure as he strolls around inside the foundation.

There is, in this passage au noir, an exact correlation with the "chemical union" that crowns the alchemical process. That moment of fusion between a volatile matter, symbolised by the dove, and a heavy matter, symbolised by the crow, that gives rise to the Form. Beyond their well-documented attempts to achieve the transmutation of lead into gold, alchemists above all sought to analyse the laws of matter in a state of flux, before it is frozen into accidental configurations. The fusion that takes place between black and white also represents that of matter and spirit.

[...] Far from any relation of dependency or causality that would install us in a teleological narrative, the cyclical nature of this work instead signifies its perpetuity. Each of the egg's revolutions operates a synthesis, a chemical solution, a recommencement.

Marguerite Pilven, Les noces chimiques (The Chemical Union), about Passage au noir



bruit et fureur ("Sound and Fury") the works of henry darger curator: Paula Aisemberg

La maison rouge presents the first monographic show in France by the American artist Henry Darger, born in 1892 in Chicago where he died in 1973. His prolific oeuvre, which embraces literature and the plastic arts, was created entirely in secret. Henry Darger never sought to have his work published or shown, a characteristic of most outsider artists. To present Henry Darger at la maison rouge, a contemporary art foundation, enables us to dissociate his work from this category and position it more widely in art history. This is an initiative begun by Nathan Lerner, who discovered Henry Darger 33 years ago. Through its themes, form and dimensions, his oeuvre echoes recent productions. Contemporary artists such as Takeshi Murakami, Jake and Dinos Chapman, Marcel Dzama or Grayson Perry "revisit" his work in their own. Henry Darger, alongside Bill Traylor, Martin Ramirez and Ted Gordon, is considered one of the pillars of American art brut, and for several years now his work has been shown at some of the foremost contemporary art venues (Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PS1 - MoMA, New York, KunstWerke, Berlin).

The presentation at la maison rouge draws a parallel between extracts from *The Realms of the Unreal* which Henry Darger wrote between 1910 and 1921, and illustrations probably made between 1918 and 1963 (his magnum opus of over 300 compositions). *Sound and Fury*, in reference to William Faulkner's 1929 novel, sets out in three parts the fantastic and tragic story of *The Realms of the Unreal*. It highlights the labyrinthine and cyclical aspect of the work, and how Henry Darger came to master his technique to illustrate, in a unique plastic language, his world. Visitors are invited to consider texts and images together, to lose themselves in this maze like the reader of the 15,000 pages Henry Darger wrote.

Henry Joseph Darger was born in Chicago in 1892. Four years later his mother died while giving birth to a baby girl whom his father placed in an orphanage the same day. At twelve, he was diagnosed with behavioural problems and subsequently placed in an institution for feebleminded children, where he shut himself off from the outside world. As a young adult he escaped and went back to Chicago. From 1932 until his death in 1973, he lived in a rented room on the second floor of 851 Webster Street (ill. 1) where he accumulated and classified a multitude of objects: books, art supplies, newspapers and magazines which he would regularly scavenge from

neighbourhood garbage. His walls were hung with photos of children cut from magazines, occasionally framed, to form family portraits. His furniture was all but hidden under religious icons, rosaries and knick-knacks. Employed as a janitor at a Catholic hospital, he was extremely pious and a regular churchgoer.

From 1910 until 1921, Henry Darger spent his nights drafting his literary work, an epic narrative of 15,145 typed pages in fifteen volumes entitled *The Story of the Vivian Girls, in What is Known as The Realms of the Unreal, of the Glandeco-Angelinnian War Storm, Caused by the Child Slave Rebellion,* which the author later named *The Realms of the Unreal* (ill. 2). In it he adopts the voice of historian and reporter, all the while punctuating his narrative with flowing descriptions, accounts of the weather, extravagant words, rhyming games and unusual grammatical constructions. "The scenes of the story, as its title indicates, lie among the nations of an unknown, or imaginary, world, or countries, with our earth as their moon, on an imaginary planet, a thousand times as large as our own world." (Henry Darger).



Volumes of *The Relams of the Unreal*

Henry Darger's literary work develops in episodes though it follows no coherent leitmotiv. His manuscript can nonetheless be resumed as follows: after a peaceful golden age, violent and incessant wars break out across numerous countries in an imaginary world whose different localities Henry Darger named Jennie Richee, Zoe-Rai-Du-Beck, Norma Catherine, etc. (orange zone in the exhibition). The cause of these hostilities is the Glandelinians' abuse of children. The Christian kingdoms, among them Abbieannie and Angelinie, are at war with the dreaded Glandelinians who kidnap and torture children then condemn them to slavery. The conflicts grow more and more intense, annihilating entire populations. The child slaves in Calverinie rebel, at which the Glandelinians invade the territory to suppress the rebellion. Most of the Christian nations join in the conflict to liberate Calverinie. (brown zone). Ultimately the Christians are victorious and there is a return to an idyllic world, a veritable Garden of Eden. (blue zone). The

main characters of this saga are the stereotypes of children's adventure stories. No doubt Henry Darger was inspired by books he had read, such as *The Wizard of* Oz, Uncle Tom's Cabin, novels by Charles Dickens, Dante's Divine Comedy, history books on the American Civil War, religious works and in particular the life of Christian martyrs, and of course his own fantasy world. Among the enemies in his narrative are General Johnston Jacken Manley and his Glandelinian armies. The heroes are the Vivian Girls, the seven brave and pretty, blonde daughters of General Robert Vivian who attempt to save the child slaves and escape from the Glandelinians, the Blengins, fabulous creatures that watch over the children, the generals and the Christian armies, the only adult figures in the work. The author often included himself in the story, on either of the two sides. Henry Darger almost certainly decided at an early stage to illustrate his work. Taking as his models the illustrated books and, even more so, comic-strips that lined his bookcases, he put his imaginary world into pictures.



1. collage

Collage was the first technique Henry Darger used to depict and give life to his characters. In the five collages in the exhibition - recently restored and protected by a polyester film - Henry Darger has cut out photographs of little girls from newspapers. Taken out of their original context and modified with colour and drawing, they

became the first portraits of the heroines of *The Realms of the Unreal*. Most of the time he added captions to complete the portrait and fully appropriate the images. In the group portrait of the Vivian Girls - of which only a fragment has survived - these short texts inform us of the age, bravery and temperament of each of the sisters. Angeline, the eldest, is very pretty. Daisy is one of the finest Vivian princesses. Jennie, though small, is the bravest of them all.

2. tracing

So as to remove his chosen images from reality and give them a different identity, around the mid-1910s (no doubt shortly after his first collages) Henry Darger adopted a new technique: tracing. Using carbon paper, waxed paper and tracing he was able to make the found image his own, free it from its environment and transform it at will. He made new portraits of the Vivian Girls, stripped of any decor, alone or in pairs, sometimes with an accessory such as a doll, an umbrella, a basket of fruit or a vase of flowers, and with their name or an initial inscribed. He hung some of these pictures in his room, like family portraits. Henry Darger used the same technique to depict the Girl Scouts and their mascot, and the enemy generals, among them General Manley who originated from a portrait of Tsar Nicholas II of Russia. Thanks to this method, Henry Darger was able to reproduce the same figure numerous times, and to bring them to life in the style of the comic-strips whose birth and expansion he would have witnessed (in panels 27 and 29a, balloons have been added so the girls can speak).

3. the panels

Henry Darger used almost exclusively the same Classicbrand drawing paper whose thickness made it suitable for watercolours, collage and for working on both sides. Sometimes a single sheet was enough to illustrate a scene (4, 11). More often than not though, he would glue two, and even six, end to end (5, 16, 27, 29, 30). Always the same size, these sheets were joined together lengthways or heightways to create landscape or portrait formats. He could then organize the different events he wished to paint, whether one, two or more scenes. Using images drawn from American popular culture of the inter-war years, gleaned in newspapers, magazines, comics, advertisements, almanacs or children's colouring books, Henry Darger put together an anthology of images. Throughout his life he would sift through cut-out images - some of which he filed away, others he pasted into telephone directories (ill. 4) - in search of models for his characters. First he positioned the figures, tracing them onto the paper, before bringing in the different scenic elements, sometimes indicating colours (the notation "orange color" on panel 10b) which he would add at a later stage, in blocks and with manifest talent. Henry Darger continued to use collage to build up a landscape (flowers, mountains, houses) or add fabulous creatures (often taken from comic-strips) and perhaps enemy soldiers (cut from newspapers). Once again, the handwritten or typed cartouches (14) that appeared with the first collages completed the scene, along with further notations such as the cardinal points ("north" written on panels 1, 9, 24). Each scene was numbered, enabling Henry Darger to situate it in his story (he kept records of the chapters he had illustrated). Some of these cartouches, probably

coming unglued, have disappeared. In 1944 Henry Darger's work took a new turning when he began taking comic-strip panels, advertisements and some of his tracings to a local drugstore to be photographed and enlarged (ill. 3). Filed away in series ("Vivian Girls in flight", "Vivian Girls. New images. Number 3, they party arty arty") these 28 x 35.5 cm enlargements provided new models for him to trace and the opportunity to compose panels with foreground and background. By the time he left his room on *Webster Street* in 1973, he had filled hundreds of sheets with illustrations on both sides, binding them together like books: some panels still have the threads used to tie them (22, 23, 24).

Henry Darger's work is inhabited by children who never grew up but never ceased to evolve either. With regard to his depiction of girls, many of them have male genitals. What should one make of this? Having been deprived of his mother and sister at a very young age, just as his sexual identity was being consolidated, the fear of castration as described by Freud could explain Henry Darger's difficulty in imagining that girls have no penis. The extreme violence inflicted on the girls by the soldiers has also raised questions about Henry Darger since his work was discovered. Who was he really? Did he commit the crimes he described? What we know about him gives us no grounds to believe that Henry Darger was in any way a sexual delinquent. Rather, his life story, lack of education and affection, and the ill-treatment he suffered as a child can explain why he sought refuge in a world of fantasy and dream, even nightmares, which he was unable, or unwilling, to leave.

bibliography

J. M. MacGregor, Henry Darger: In the Realms of the Unreal, Delano Greenridge Editions, 2002.

M. Bonesteel, Henry Darger: Art and Selected Writings, Rizzoli, New York, 2000.

Klaus Biesenbach, Kiyoko Lerner, Henry Darger: Disasters of War, KW Institute of Contemporary Art, Berlin, 2000.

B. D. Anderson & M. Thévoz, Darger: The Henry Darger Collection at the American Folk Art Museum, Harry N. Abrams, New York, 2001.
A catalogue published by Andrew Edlin Gallery in New York accompanies Bruit et fureur at la maison rouge.

Text by Edward Madrid Gomez. In French and English, 80 pages, illustrated, €35.

"In the Realms of the Unreal – The Mystery of Henry Darger", an 82-minute film about the life and work of Henry Darger, directed by Jessica Hyu in 2003, will be screened in parallel to the exhibition.

I the protagonists of the *Realms of the Unreal* Vivian Girls
Girl Scouts
Générals
Blengins

II the works

Collages (orange wall)

1a. At Jennie Richee. They reach an improvised shelter just in time.

1b At Jennie Richee. Facing the fury of the Hurricane like thunderstorm they race madly for shelter as the rain comes at a rate to beat them down.

2a. At Jennie Richee, half clothed they escape down the Aronburg Run.

2b At Phelantonburg. Vivian Girls capture a Glandelinian general after frustrating sharpshooters.

3a At Second Battle of McHollester Run. They are pursued. This is a tropical region for some unknown reason there trees are dead

3b At Wickey San. are pursued.

4a. At Jennie Richee. 2 of story to Evans. They attempt to get away by rolling themselves in floor rugs.

4b At Jennie Richee, are rescued by Evans and his soldiers after a desperate fight.

5a At Jennie Richee storm destroy improvised shelter 5b Believing storm slackening they venture into the open to head for their own camp

6 At Battle of McHollester Run. They make a daring escape down a long 250-foot rope though fired on from far below by merciless Glandelinian soldiery.

7 After the battle

8 At Journall they break out of the enclosure and run for freedom and are persued.

8a At Calverinia, are besieged in mansion of large size and try to fight the foe off.

9a. At Norma Catherine, only to escape again9b At Phelanlonberg are pursued vigorously

10 a At Jennie Richee. Hard pressed during storm by pursuing enemy they become lost in cavern of volcano Mt.Soofreemio, cavern at sections strangely lighted by mysterious source. The soldiers in distance close in one little girls.

10b. Vivian Girls help Kindermine, Fred Hance and Hanson to capture a Glandelinian spy which is successful after a hard chasse.

11 At Mic Call's Run Colls Junction. Vivian Girl save strangling children from phenomenon of frightful shape

12a At Zoe-Rai-Du-Beck. Evans and the Vivian Girls brings a wagon load of Children guarded by child scouts to safty though persued by Glandelinians.

12b After Zoe-Rai-Du-Beck, Vivian Girls persued wildly seek refuge on a old abandoned house and...

13 Vivian Girls captured by Glandelinians under a general Purgatorian. Near Julie Callio. (collection abcd, Paris) Flags of the nations of the *Realms of the Unreal*.

14 They try to get away with the enemys plans, and some valuable jewellery, belonging to themselves, after setting fire thousands of tents, causing the wildest confusion are persued.

15 The Battle of Norma Catherine

16 Untitled

17 a At Jullia Callia via Norma are captured by Glandelinians twice but later escape with their lives.

17a' After Osmondonson. Vivian Girls persued by forest fires and unseen Glandelinian foes.

17a" At Aronburg run Glorinia. Vivian fired on by Glandelinian Cannon

17b Trapped in lighted part of cavern they try to eluded Glandelinians surrounding them

18a At Jennie Richee for refusing to tell they are buried up to their waists in the sand near the river to die thirst unless they tell

18b At Cedernine, they are treacherously attacked by Glandelinian soldiers

19a Waves engulf them

19b At Phelanlongburg they witness fury of battle

20 At Jennie Richee after killing and wounding guards rescue many other naked child prisoner but who were not slaves

21a Are almost murdered themselves though they fight for their lives typhoon saves them

21a' At Norma Catherine via Jennie Richee, Vivian Girls witness childrens bowels and others entrails torn out by infuriated Glandelinians.

21a"The children who are naked are made to suffer from the worst torture

22a Untitled

22b At Cederenine are again in danger from forest fire 22b' At Jennie Turmer, Vivian Girls being captured by Glandelinians. They tie them to standing boards and leave one man to hang them.

23a Untitled

23b At Norma Catherine nearing enemys lines are captured

24a Untitled

24b At Norma Catherine. Are captured again by Glandelinian Cavarly

25a Vivian Girls witness strange blood curlding phenomena in "possessed house" probably something considering of the Aronburg murder

25a' At Mc Calls run. They observed a strange black form in the room above them through the air

25a"At Mc Call run. Hands of fire

25a''' ATTORRINGTON. Imperuled by terrific explosions.

26a At Jennie Richee. They had seized a Glandelinian officer who had been in swimming and though he is half naked they had forced him to sign a par... through the foe lines and tied him to a tree so he could not noise the alarm

26a' The Glandelinian were about to hang the brave little girls 26a' They attempt to hide in huge fiddle cases but are discovered because the doors were of glass

27b At Jennie Richee. Break out of prison camp killing or wounding guards.

27a At Jennie Richee. Also free other child prisoners at same time.

28a At Jennie Richee. The Blengins stay under shelter 28b At Jennie Richee lightning stricker the crazy out fit again

29 Untitled

30 Untitled

31 Untitled

32. At Jennie Richee to outwit the Glandelinians Boy Scouts one girl at extreme left of picture drops fireants down his back



The House of Opportunity - Long Model, 2004-2005. Collection SMAK, Gand. Courtesy Zeno X Gallery, Anvers

the good ingredients michaël borremans

La maison rouge presents the first showing in France of works by Michaël Borremans, a Belgian artist born in 1963 and based in Ghent. For this exhibition, Michaël Borremans has chosen two series of drawings - The House of Opportunity and The Good Ingredients - and seven recent paintings. In each of the oils on canvas, the composition is sober, uncluttered and tightly framed, while the light thrown onto the subject gives the impression of a photo studio portrait. The models pose with disquieting languor (*The Bodies* (1), 2005, *Three Men* Standing, 2005), alone or in groups of two, three at most. Always, an element of the bizarre undermines the apparent sobriety and banality of the scene: a dissymmetry of the face (Portrait, 2005), a man wearing a bonnet with two ears (Man with Bonnet, 2005), a young man pushing twigs into his nostrils (Horse Hunting, 2005), two slightly different paintings of the exact same view of a man's shoes (Pink Shoes, 2005), a brightly-lit face standing out against a disproportionate shadow, cast by an unidentified source (Three Men Standing, 2005). The viewer is further unsettled by the ambiguity of the era to which these scenes belong. The figures in Michaël Borremans' paintings belong to an age that seems as much a part of today's glossy magazines as 1940s imagery. Through the strangeness that runs through them, Michaël Borremans' paintings share the spirit of Belgian surrealism. Though this is not his only heritage. In *The Bodies* (1), the position of the bodies, the subdued brushstrokes and the warmth of the earthy brown, grey and ochre tones are a direct throwback to Manet and his *Torero mort* (1863). The significant references in his paintings and drawings to art history (painting, sculpture, architecture but also film and performance) nurture Michaël Borremans' art.

For his drawings, in pencil, watercolour and black ink, often with white ink highlights, Michaël Borremans works on crumpled envelopes, book covers, the backs of old photos, pages torn from calendars or *passepartouts*. Each medium comes with a history of its own that shows through in the drawing. In *The House of Opportunity*, a series which he commenced in 2002 and has regularly added to ever since, the house in question is a

parallelepiped with a three-sided roof and hundreds of red-shuttered windows. Michaël Borremans' house is different from a traditional dwelling. People interact with it but they don't live in it. It is an object without content, collapsible (*The Filling*, 2005) and transposable: an imposing monument in the middle of the open countryside (*The House of Opportunity* (*Im* Rhönlandshaft), 2004), a model to be contemplated in a museum like a work of art (*The House of Opportunity* (*The Chance of a Lifetime*), 2003), or to take home and observe (The Journey, (True Colours), 2002). His small drawings, often with notations in the borders, resemble the first draft for a building project or a public monument in praise of modern architecture. In each of its guises, this house stands for the repression of the "happiness for all" which our society promised. For Michael Borremans, this red and white cube is also an allusion to contemporary art and sculpture which he makes the subject of his own work, an *opportunity* for himself. In his recent series, *The* Good Ingredients, which gives the exhibition its name, the house gives way to a different type of construction, built from bodies. Horses and humans are manipulated, transformed and reified to be arranged in patterns, circles and crosses. Michaël Borremans depicts a world of alienated individuals. Through them he shares his doubts as to our capacity to act as free and enlightened beings, a belief he specifically illustrates here through the burning issue of hostage-taking, questioning how the media reports the mises en scène played out by the ones who hold the arms (*Point of View*, 2006). Whether forcibly imposed (*Two Circles*, 2006) or of seemingly free will (*The* Good Ingredients, 2006), this submissive attitude is accentuated by the fact that certain figures, attached to bases, are like lead figurines that have been knocked over.

Traduction Sandra Pecht

Acknowledge:

Kiyoko Lerner pour sa générosité et sa confiance sans qui l'exposition de Henry Darger n'aurait pu avoir lieu, Andrew Edlin, Jean-Pierre Ritsch-Fisch, Bruno Decharme, Franck Demaegd (Galerie Zeno X), la galerie David Zwirner (New York), Liliane et Youri Vincy (galerie Lara Vincy), Marguerite Pilven, Emmanuel Rodrigues, Benjamin Vermot, tous les prêteurs qui ont préféré rester anonymes.

Et bien sûr les artistes : Denise A. Aubertin, Michaël Borremans et Nicolas Darrot

partenaires

- I Guzzini Illuminazione, Le Monde.fr, l'hôtel Marceau-Bastille, Paris-art.com, le Théatre de l'Odéon, les chèques culture
- la maison rouge est membre du réseau tram- lle de France