



press kit

at la maison rouge June 11th to September 7th 2008

press preview Tuesday June 10th 2008 3pm to 6pm

preview Tuesday June 10th 2008 6pm to 9pm

Augustin Lesage and Elmar Trenkwalder, inspired artists

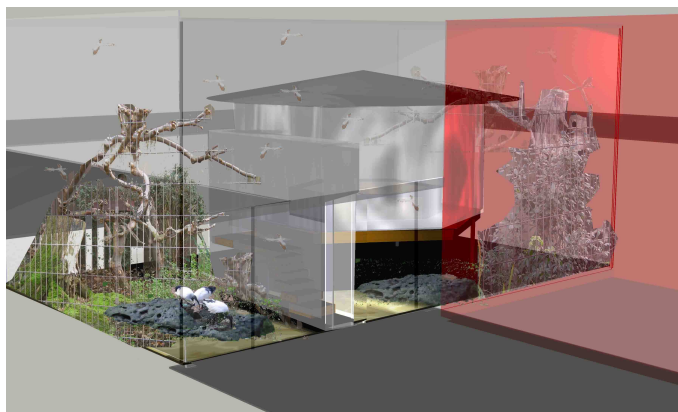


Composition décorative 1928 (dated 1932)



WVZ 150 TRE 2000

Birdhouse Café, a project by Andrea Blum for la maison rouge patio



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presentation

A private, non-profit foundation, la maison rouge opened in June 2004 in Paris. Its purpose is to promote contemporary creation through a programme of three solo or thematic temporary exhibitions a year, certain of which are staged by independent curators.

La maison rouge was created on the initiative of Antoine de Galbert, an art collector and active figure on the French art scene. While Antoine de Galbert's own collection is not shown, the entire project is fashioned by his personality and outlook as a collector. Beginning with *Behind Closed Doors: the private life of collections*, la maison rouge stages exhibitions on the theme of private collections and the issues and questions surrounding them.

antoine de galbert

Born in 1955 and a graduate in political science, Antoine de Galbert worked in corporate management before opening a contemporary art gallery in Grenoble for some ten years. Concurrently, he purchased the first works in a collection that was to take on growing importance in his life. In 2000 he chose to create a foundation as a means of both anchoring his commitment to contemporary creation and opening his collection to the public.

the building

La maison rouge is installed in a renovated factory in the Bastille district of Paris, overlooking the Arsenal marina. The 2,500 sq m site, including 1,300 sq m of exhibition space, is centred around "la maison rouge" or red house.

By naming the venue after this house, la maison rouge makes clear its vocation as a welcoming, convivial space where visitors can see exhibitions, attend lectures, enjoy a drink or explore the bookstore.

The artist Jean-Michel Alberola (born in Paris in 1953) was commissioned for the interior design of the reception areas.

the bookstore

la maison rouge has chosen Bookstorming, a specialist in contemporary art publications, for its bookstore at 10 bis, boulevard de la Bastille. Its selection of titles is regularly updated to reflect the current exhibitions at la maison rouge. It also stocks art DVDs and videos, publications on the latest developments in the contemporary art world, and proposes an important catalogue of out-of-print books and books by artists.

Bookstorming, t. +33 (0)1 42 25 15 58

the restaurant

Located at the centre of the foundation, around the "red house" from which it takes its name, the restaurant is the perfect setting at any time of day from which to view the temporary exhibition in the patio, over lunch or a drink (set menus and brunch at the weekend).

Since February 2008, catering at la maison rouge has been by Le Transversal, already in action at the Mac Val contemporary art museum in Vitry. Young chef Kahena Boukhechem takes charge in the kitchen to concoct dishes that reflect the creative spirit of the venue itself.

activities at la maison rouge

le vestibule

Always attentive and open to creations by young artists, Antoine de Galbert created this open-access space in 2006, showing new exhibitions every four to six weeks.

the suite

la maison rouge develops other activities alongside its exhibitions, and in collaboration with Gérard Wacjman has opened a hotel room, the Suite, inside its walls. It welcomes guests from all fields of thought and contemporary creation to provoke unexpected encounters with the public.

for children

One Wednesday a month, a story-teller takes children ages 4 to 11 on a journey into the land of imagination.

Story + snack: €6.50 for children and accompanying adults.

Lasts around 90 minutes

Next storytimes:

June 18th 2008 at 3pm

July 2nd 2008 at 3pm

Information and reservations: stephaniemolinar@lamaisonrouge.org

guided tours

for individuals

Every Saturday and Sunday at 4pm, la maison rouge organises a free guided tour of the current exhibitions, led by art history students specialising in contemporary art.

Admission: €6.50

for groups

Guided tours on request (€75 + admission)

Information and reservations: Stéphanie Molinar +33 (0)1.40.01.92.79. or stephaniemolinar@lamaisonrouge.org

les amis de la maison rouge

A non-profit organisation, les amis de la maison rouge is closely involved with and supports Antoine de Galbert's project. It contributes to reflection and debates on the theme of the private collection, organises activities to coincide with the exhibitions, and promotes la maison rouge among French and international audiences.

Membership from €70

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publications

la maison rouge publishes a catalogue for each of the private collections it shows.

Online orders and full details at www.lamaisonrouge.org

la maison rouge publications

> **"AUGUSTIN LESAGE AND ELMAR TRENKWALDER, INSPIRED ARTISTS" EXHIBITION CATALOGUE**

The catalogue for the exhibition, in French and German, is published by Fage editions with texts by Savine Faupin, Frédéric Paul and Pierre Dourthe.

> **"LA MAISON ROUGE - FONDATION ANTOINE DE GALBERT 2004 - 2008"**

La maison rouge and Archibooks are pleased to present a comprehensive retrospective catalogue of exhibitions and events at la maison rouge since it opened in 2004.

This 273-page work, which includes a bound insert of texts translated into English, will look back over the different stages in the Foundation's creation and programming, centred around the personalities of its president Antoine de Galbert and director Paula Aisemberg. Featuring many previously unpublished interviews, the book brings together each of the curators and some of the personalities in art and architecture who, directly or indirectly, have marked the four years of la maison rouge, now a foremost venue for contemporary art in France.

Retail price: €25. Published on June 3rd 2008.

This catalogue will be presented to the press at the opening of the "Augustin Lesage and Elmar Trenkwaldler" exhibition.

> **THE "PRIVÉES" COLLECTION**

For each of the collections it shows, la maison rouge and Fage jointly publish a catalogue as part of the "privées" collection.

In French and English

To buy online or for more information, visit the la maison rouge website.

Around the exhibitions

Thursday June 12th

Conference by Andrea Blum

On the occasion of her exhibition in the patio of la maison rouge, Andrea Blum will give a presentation on her work and artistic process.

Thursday July 10th

To coincide with its presidency of the European Union, France has invited the EU's 27 members to take part in a European Cultural Season and, from July 7th to 13th, Austria is the featured country. As part of this, la maison rouge will open its doors to the Forum Culturel Autrichien on July 10th for a programme of events.

> The full programme and dates for activities are at www.lamaisonrouge.org

Augustin Lesage and Elmar Trenkwalder, inspired artists

The summer 2008 exhibition at la maison rouge is an encounter between two bodies of work: that of the French mediumistic artist **Augustin Lesage** (born 1876 in Auchel, Pas-de-Calais - died 1954 in Burbure, Pas-de-Calais) and the Austrian sculptor and painter **Elmar Trenkwalder** (born 1959 in Weißenbach am Lech, Tyrol).

Two singular oeuvres, distinct as much for their era as for the form of art with which they are associated – outsider art for one, contemporary art for the other – yet both produced by individuals who are equally convinced of the magical force of the artwork.

The idea for this exhibition came, almost instinctively, from Antoine de Galbert, the founder of la maison rouge, who happened to bring their work together in his collection¹. When he asked Elmar Trenkwalder if he would show his work alongside Lesage's paintings, he not only accepted but also revealed his appreciation of the mediumistic artist's work.

A coal-miner in Ferfay in northern France, **Augustin Lesage** began painting at the age of 35 after hearing voices while working in the mine. "In January 1912, powerful Spirits came to me, ordering me to draw and paint which I had never done before. Having never seen a tube of paint, imagine my surprise at this revelation: "But I know nothing about painting." "Don't worry about such an insignificant detail," I was told, "We will work through your hand." I then received, in writing, the names of the paints and brushes I would need and, guided by planetary artists, I began painting after coming home, exhausted, from the mine." (Augustin Lesage in 1925).

Accepted into the spiritist milieu which recognised him as a medium - "his capacity to 'welcome' the message of the invisible spirit" – he gave up mining in 1923 and devoted himself to painting until his death in 1954.

Over and over, Augustin Lesage insisted that he had no control over his hand or vision when painting. He explained (extensively, when talking with Dr Osty in 1927) that he never knew in advance what he was going to paint and that he obeyed the spirits of his dead sister Marie, Leonardo da Vinci, Marius of Tyana, and others.

As Hubert Larcher and Michel Thévoz point out in the catalogue of the 1989 monographic exhibition of the painter's work, Lesage found a satisfactory explanation for his painting in the spiritualism and spiritism which developed in Europe and the United States in the mid-nineteenth century, particularly in the mining regions of northern France and Belgium². Says Thévoz, "Subconsciously, Lesage had the idea of presenting his artistic vocation under the cloak of spiritism, thus circumventing socio-cultural obstacles. The confiscation of art by the bourgeoisie must indeed have been prohibitive for a worker's claim to communicate with Leonardo da Vinci to be considered less ridiculous than his desire to paint!". And so "just as he continued to work in the mine under Ferfay-Cauchy, so he painted under the spirits' behest [...] and when he sold his paintings, he sold them for the hourly rate paid to a miner." (Hubert Larcher). "I'm a worker at the spirits' disposal," he declared.

Just as the collier, mindful of the risks of collapse, cuts evenly into the coal face, so Lesage's paintings are symmetrical. He painted line by line, from top to bottom, in the manner of a miniaturist but on canvases as large as nine square metres, if necessary gradually unrolling them as the painting progressed. This manner of proceeding influences the paintings' structure in regular horizontal sections. From 1927, Lesage began to depict faces, animals and figures from Oriental, African and Egyptian legends and religions in his work.

¹ Works shown on the title page of this press release.

² On this subject, Michel Thévoz writes that "the theory of metempsychosis, whereby souls will be reincarnated in one or other form according to their merit, results in universal socialism and replaces Christianity's future eternity with immanent justice here on earth. In this, spiritism has an essentially grass-roots, anti-institutional quality. It can be seen as the symbolic resource of those who, brutally snatched from their socio-cultural environment, atomised in the solitude and exploitation of labour and frustrated by a new, repressive and inhuman framework, aspire to re-establish, more or less secretly and in a most erratic way, a link with their tradition, that is their dead." Lesage exhibition catalogue, 1989.

After some local exhibitions, Lesage showed his paintings at the Maison des Spiritistes, then at the Salon des Beaux-Arts, the Salon d'Automne and the Salon des Artistes Français, where he would exhibit each year from 1934. He met the writer Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and numerous other personalities, and was acclaimed by the press. Lesage travelled extensively during this period, with exhibitions in Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, England, Scotland, Switzerland and Belgium. These halcyon years ended with the outbreak of war. Lesage stopped painting in 1952 and died, at his home in Burbure, in 1954.

Elmar Trenkwalder's interest in Augustin Lesage's work began a few years before his studies at the Vienna School of Fine Arts, on seeing a reproduction of Lesage's first painting in a magazine³. The image made a lasting impression; fifteen years later he would find out who the artist was.

As a student in the studios of Max Weiler and Arnulf Rainer, Trenkwalder devoted himself to the study of painting while staying alert to art produced by people on the fringes of society, in particular by reading pioneering studies in this field by Dr Walter Morgenthaler and Dr Hans Prinzhorn in the 1920s. Arnulf Rainer, who had begun to explore states of mental confusion in his work, and who in 1963 began to buy art by patients in psychiatric institutions, took Trenkwalder inside the Gugging Clinic, where he met Dr Leo Navratil and discovered his patients' work (including Johann Hauser, Oswald Tschirtner and August Walla).

In the mid-1980s, Trenkwalder began to teach himself sculpture. Prior to his first free-standing sculptures in 1987, in bronze, terracotta and glazed terracotta, he modelled raised forms in clay, making the transition from the flat surface of the canvas to the three dimensions of sculpture. Since then his art has encompassed painting, drawing and sculpture.

Elmar Trenkwalder incorporates multiple references into each of these media, drawing on many different eras, cultures and genres to "produce a world full of hallucinations, unexpected associations and fabulous monsters." (Peter Weiermair). "I feel as though I am "sucking up" the images and emotions of the world. I transform these images and these emotions as would a dream." (Interview with Bernard Marcadé).

Beyond the symmetry, ornamentation, metamorphosis and incorporation of the animate in the inert - some of the characteristics which the two artists' imaginary architectural constructions share - Lesage and Trenkwalder both make use of a vocabulary which they borrow from different stylistic traditions to produce a work with a predominantly symbolic function.

The exhibition will show paintings and drawings by Augustin Lesage and six large sculptures by Elmar Trenkwalder, including two specially-created works, together with a selection of drawings.

Which of Augustin Lesage's works will be shown has yet to be decided. These should include some thirty major pieces, each representative of the different stages in the course of his work: the first mediumistic drawings, executed at spiritist séances in the 1910s, some of the large works that brought him recognition in the 1920s, a selection of works featuring Egyptian iconography, and several decorative compositions of the 1940s.

A catalogue in French and German will be published by Fage Editions to coincide with the exhibition.

The exhibition is co-produced by the Forum Culturel Autrichien.

forum culturel autrichien par 

³ Untitled, 1912-1913, oil on canvas, 300 x 300 cm, Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne. The fragile nature of this work means it cannot be taken out of the museum and consequently will not be shown in the exhibition.

Michel Thévoz, "Augustin Lesage and spiritism" from the "Augustin Lesage 1876-1954" exhibition catalogue (extracts)

"[...] What hope is there for a miner in northern France at the turn of the century, for a man on the brink of forty, condemned to exhaustion, misery, sickness and decline? What recourse does he have against a social system whose sole purpose it seems is to enslave him, education that perpetuates ignorance, medicine that generates illness, justice that muzzles, a church that mystifies and culture that humiliates? To challenge a single cog in this dehumanising machine would have been reckless and, for anyone, suicidal. Certainly, the miner Augustin Lesage never openly, perhaps never even in his most secret thoughts, questioned the established order. And yet clearly, in all objectivity, he broke free of his chains, he publicly professed a socio-occultist doctrine, he illegally practiced medicine, he made light of his judges and his paintings eclipsed those of established artists whose works hung inside the Grand Palais. [...]

"[...] Imagination appears as the only recourse for a man for whom there is no way out. One day Augustin Lesage was working in the mine, five hundred metres beneath the ground, in a tunnel just fifty centimetres across. He was thirty-five years old. He had barely seen sunlight in the past twenty years. Perhaps he was beginning to feel the first symptoms of the emphysema that would force him into early retirement. Pun or no pun, he had reached rock bottom. He was buried alive, a corpse on borrowed time and, until then, mere muscle and sinew dispossessed of all humanity. The spiritist theory says as much, with its concept of the perispirit, a vaporous envelope that accompanies a dead person's soul in exile while waiting to be reincarnated. The perispirit's exodus is a reality or, if one prefers, an effective irreality, the consequence of ruthless social negation. It is the positive drawn from a negative whereby the individual is reduced to the physical materiality of a slave. Mediumism is an adequate, or at least symptomatic, reflection of the condition of the damned here on earth who are in search of their soul.

And so we can understand Lesage's illumination and his adherence to spiritism, which no doubt saved him from madness. Psychoanalysts tell us that whatever has been repressed from real life does not disappear but inevitably returns in a delirious form, imposing itself on the subject beyond any symbolic articulation. The voice Lesage heard deep in the mine was his own, stifled since childhood by upbringing, the humility drummed into him, conditioning at school and paternalistic ideology; a voice that returns in extremis in the grave, a voice that is all the more powerful because it is now alien, autonomous and free, because it carries in it the ambitions Lesage had had to forgo, because it is charged with transference energy. [...]

"[...] For a thirty-five-year-old miner, enslaved since his teenage years, the idea of becoming a painter was far-fetched, inconceivable even. Such a possibility could only be voiced through his guides, Leonardo da Vinci and later Marius of Tyana, and to the bewilderment of Lesage himself who took care to confide in no one, not even his family. "I was afraid they would think me mad." When he was told to buy paint and brushes, and had to walk through his village with a roll of canvas on his shoulder, he felt he would die of shame. Subconsciously though, Lesage had the idea of presenting his artistic vocation under the cloak of spiritism, thus circumventing socio-cultural obstacles. The confiscation of art by the bourgeoisie must indeed have been prohibitive for a worker's claim to communicate with Leonardo da Vinci to be considered less ridiculous than his desire to paint!

In hindsight and somewhat cynically perhaps, we can be thankful for the dissuasive effect of this elitist culture which forced Lesage to take the roundabout route of spiritism. Released from any artistic

claim, he was free to abandon the academic model, the paintings of museums. Had he openly devoted his free time to art, he would have been no more than a Sunday painter and his work an aping of legitimate art. Nowhere is Jean Dubuffet's affirmation that art flees as soon as its name is pronounced more cruelly true than in the milieus that lie furthest outside the culture of the cultured, the same ones on which it exerts its most paralysing fascination. [...]

"[...] Perhaps Lesage has given us the key to an artistic enigma? Where does the artist find his power of expression? Where does he find the distance that will give him the necessary perspective on himself and the world? Is he not, like us all, a prisoner of his own mental sphere, his experience of the collective sensitivity? Is he not like trees in spring, quivering with new leaves and which Francis Ponge ruthlessly puts in their place: "You can't make trees using a tree's means"? Do not individuals who have been systematically deprived of the cultural means to resist adhere more strongly to ideologies? Be that as it may, Lesage fell for neither cultural mirages nor religious intoxication. He made his own way out by forging ahead regardless, raising the stakes on his own alienation, staying one step ahead of the inevitable and, in doing so, creating a space that would allow him to double back on himself and invent the language of his own finitude. Does death really transform life into destiny? In the case of a life such as his, preordained since birth by an inescapable social condition, the only solution is to rewrite the equation. By anticipating his death through communication with the dead, Lesage gave a symbolic life to his destiny as a subman. His spiritist beliefs were proven beyond all hope, even as perispirits were on the verge of extinction, as his work - ever more present, enigmatic and fascinating - has survived him."

Biography (from the "Augustin Lesage 1876-1954" exhibition catalogue)

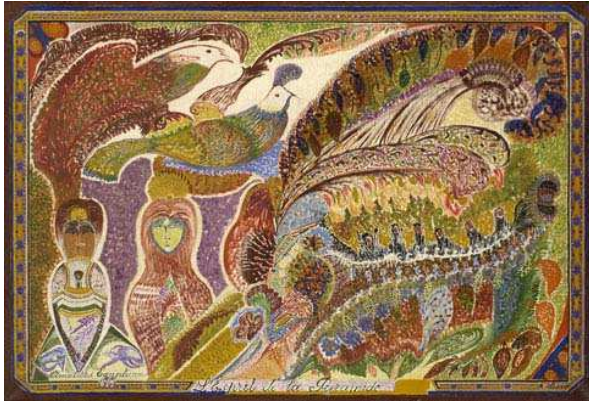
- 1876 Birth of Augustin Henri Lesage in Saint-Pierre-Lez-Auchel, France
- 1883 Death of Marie, his younger sister, and of his mother
Starts work as a pit boy for Ferfay Mines
- 1894 Meets Armandine Irma Diéval
- 1895 Birth of their daughter, Marguerite Armandine
Injured in a mining accident
- 1897 Military service
- 1900 Returns to Ferfay Mines
- 1901 Marries Armandine Irma Diéval
Birth of their son, Augustin [Gustave]
- 1908 With his friend Ambroise Lecomte, is elected councillor for Ferfay
- 1909 Consults an astrologer
- End 1911 or Jan 1912 Hears a voice telling him he will become a painter while working in the mine
- 1912 First spiritist séances where he does drawings signed "Marie"
Starts working on a painting measuring 9 sq m
- 1913 Leaves Ferfay Mines and, with Ambroise Lecomte, starts working as a healer in Béthune
- 1914 Conscripted into the army. Active service in Douai, Dunkirk and Yser
- 1916 Detached to Ferfay Mines
- 1918 Moves to Burbure
- 1921 Jean Meyer, director of *La Revue Spirite*, visits him at his home
- 1924 His work is shown at Douai Town Hall at the initiative of the local spiritist circle
- 1925 Death of Ambroise Lecomte
His work, including *Symbolic composition on the spiritual world*, is shown at the Maison des Spiritistes in Paris
Takes part in the International Spiritist Congress where he meets Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Louis Viala and Léon Denis
- 1926 Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts Salon at the Grand Palais, Paris
Shows *The spirit of the pyramid* at the 19th Salon d'Automne, Architecture section
Exhibits at a spiritist meeting in Dunkirk
- 1927 Invited by Dr Osty to the International Metapsychic Institute in Paris. Paints in public
Takes part in the 3rd International Spiritist Congress in London
Exhibits at the Roubaix Spiritist Circle
- 1929 Two paintings, both entitled *Decorative composition*, are accepted by the Salon des Artistes Français
- 1930 Salon des Artistes Français
Exhibits at the Psychic and Spiritist Studies Circle in Roubaix
- 1931 Salon des Artistes Français
- 1932 Exhibits in his home
Salon des Artistes Français
- 1933 First regional exhibition of painting and sculpture
Salon des Artistes Français
- 1934 Becomes a member of the Société des Artistes Français
Shows a dozen paintings in Oran where Louis Viala gives a lecture on his work
- 1935 Exhibits paintings in Alger
- 1936 Tells *Le Réveil du Nord* newspaper he has completed 360 paintings
Tours Algeria and Morocco
Salon des Artistes Français

- Takes part in the international exhibition of spiritualist painting at the Society of Nations in Geneva, and shows his work in Brussels
- 1938 Exhibits in Alger, Oran, Casablanca, London (British College of Psychic Science) and Edinburgh (Psychic College)
- 1939 Travels to Egypt. Discovers Menna's tomb which he says he already depicted in one of his paintings
- 1942 Death of his son, Gustave
- 1946 Travels to Casablanca and exhibits there
- 1948 Exhibits in Nice
- 1949 Exhibits in Rosendaël, Roubaix and Albi
- 1950 Death of "Mandine", his wife
- 1951 Exhibits at the Galerie Studio in Brussels under the aegis of the Brabant Spiritist Alliance and the Belgian Spiritist Union
- 1953 Exhibition and conference at the Maison des Spirites in Paris
Has his left eye removed
- 1954 Augustin Lesage dies at the age of seventy-eight

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- Augustin Lesage 1876-1954*, catalogue of the retrospective, Arras, Béthune, Lausanne, Florence, Cairo, edited by Philippe Sers, Paris, 1988

Augustin Lesage



The spirit of the pyramid ca.1927 private collection



Symbols of the pyramids ca.1927-28 private collection

Interview: Elmar Trenkwalder / Bernard Marcadé (extracts)

Elmar Trenkwalder, Galerie du Collège Marcel Duchamp, Ecole Municipale des Beaux-Arts, Chateauroux, FRAC Limousin, Limoges, 1998

Elmar Trenkwalder – I feel as though I am "sucking up" the images and emotions of the world. I transform these images and these emotions as would a dream. I can use the exact memory of an object or a landscape although I might paint or construct an inexistent landscape, one I've never seen yet which seems very familiar...

Bernard Marcadé – *What Freud called *Unheimliche*, the uncanny?*

E.T. – Exactly. A mixture of the "sublime" and "déjà vu"...

B.M. – *Your work is deliberately ornamental and decorative. Indeed, your paintings and sculptures, paradoxically of course, seem to bear out Adolf Loos' essay on *Ornament and Crime*. There is an atmosphere of crime lurking in your work. Your paintings in particular could form the perfect backdrop to a crime, as though ornamentation, like ancient Roman grotesques, conceals a supposedly dangerous content. Of course, this may seem to contradict what I described earlier as a form of hedonism.*

E.T. – Nowhere is better suited to paradox and metamorphosis than art. Art has the capacity to join things which have nothing to do together. I'm incapable of saying that ornament is crime but I'm just as incapable of saying it isn't! Ultimately, it's not my problem. All I care about is living with my visions, but also with my times. Linking ornament to crime is a tempting proposition but quite a dangerous one too...

B.M. – *Yet no one could say you use ornament in a neutral or purely ornamental way.*

E.T. – Obviously I don't see ornament as being merely superficial. Ornament is the very form of life. It is an experience.

B.M. – *In this sense, do you feel you are heir to the Austrian Jugendstil?*

E.T. – Of course Art Nouveau made an impression on me and still does, whether in Munich, Brussels or Paris... But Loos' architecture appeals to me too...

B.M. – *They're not mutually exclusive.*

E.T. – I see the artistic act as a kind of inhalation process, inhaling forms, images and feelings. Two or three years can go by before these things resurface in a work. It's happened that the idea for a painting has come to me two years before the painting actually takes form.

B.M. – *Your work generally takes a long time to mature...*

E.T. – I do a lot of drawings and sketches to speed up the imagination process.

B.M. – *So do all your paintings and sculptures begin as drawings?*

E.T. – Not always. I might construct a sculpture fragment by fragment, without any preliminary studies. Take this glazed terracotta piece from 1996, standing 2.60m high. It comprises fourteen separate elements.

B.M. – *So you sometimes improvise your sculptures, letting the unpredictable and the accidental guide you in your work. Like the dreams whose course we can direct when we are in that intermediate zone just before waking...*

E.T. – The truth is, my work isn't guided by any kind of rule. I can't restrict myself to a single method. There may be a preliminary study or there may not. I stay very much alert to what's going on. I want to absorb myself in all kinds of materials and let them show me where to go. In 1984, I did a series of lacquered paintings on card which gave the illusion of being on wood. I liked the contradiction between the apparent heaviness of the material and its fragile nature.

B.M. – *You shy away from clear-cut oppositions. Is this to maintain a form of ambiguity?*

E.T. – These works are part way between one- and three-dimensional, between painting and sculpture. But also between interior and exterior, like my paintings in the 1980s when I turned the canvas back inside the frame. I like to bring mental space into contact with material space.

B.M. – *You want materials to take on the form of your imagination?*

E.T. – That's exactly the correspondence I'm looking for. It fascinates me.

B.M. – *Symmetry is a constant feature of your work and yet this symmetry doesn't come from an ideal geometric concept, it seems to come from the body, as though this bodily symmetry then spreads to other subjects: architecture, landscapes, etc.*

E.T. – You're right. Mathematically speaking, this isn't perfect symmetry. For me it's to do with reflection. Body and space are, more often than not, two separate entities. I try to find a passage between the two by opening up the representation of the body to that of exterior space, such as a landscape. I'd like to do a glass sculpture that would turn the interior out towards the surface.

[...]

B.M. – *It seems most of your work is "governed" by an almost generalised eroticisation. Just as your interior projects itself onto the exterior, your eroticism spreads to every subject you approach. In this sense, the androgyne has a central role in that it is the ultimate sexually symmetrical figure.*

E.T. – It's always a question of reversibility, and probably the desire to form one.

B.M. – *You don't use eroticism to express sexual pleasure but more the slow construction of a unitary form...*

E.T. – It's a metaphor. A metaphor for life as a fusional principle.

[...]

I love Facteur Cheval's *Palais Idéal*. It's a beautiful vision. Wölfli's drawings also tend towards a form of universality. It's one of the possibilities of art. Not the only one, of course, but a very deep-reaching one that has a decisive influence on my work. I hope to contribute to this spirit. Having said that, I admire Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci too. Bernini's sculptures in Rome have an effect on me; so do the ones at Villa Borghese. These are very different worlds but for me, they share the same intensity.

B.M. – *What about hallucination?*

E.T. – A decisive factor. You should know that I'm epileptic. I had my first seizure when I was about 25. They always begin with hallucinations, by a very dense, almost dream-like imaginative activity.

B.M. – *Are you saying you use your epilepsy in your work?*

E.T. – I try to find my way back to these images, which isn't easy as it all happens as though in a tunnel. It's also an extremely physical experience...

B.M. – *You could say you take a very personal approach to the "vision" which comes to you through physical experience rather than any kind of belief or a purely mental state. But what about the pain?*

E.T. – This experience is indeed linked to fear and anguish. However, these feelings are mixed in with emotions relating to beauty and possibly even pleasure. I don't try to provoke seizures artificially, using medication. I know people who deliberately set out to provoke déjà vu by staring at the sun, for example. They aren't always conscious of the danger they could bring on themselves. Inevitably, a person will fall over at some point during a seizure and can suffer serious injury.

[...]

E.T. – I found out I was epileptic just two years ago.

[...]

B.M. – *And before then, how did you qualify this state?*

E.T. – As some sort of overexcitement caused by fatigue or pollution. Of course there was that rush of images then periods of absence and loss of consciousness. I could never say how long these lasted. Then I would come round as though after a very heavy dream, followed by intense fatigue...

[...]

I'm always looking for that relationship between interior and exterior spaces. I want to make a connexion between the space of the hand and that of the imagination... My first paintings with the canvas folded back into the frame were metaphors for this. Today it's the medium that counts. I no longer think about, or with, the medium but simply bring it into being...

B.M. – *By medium, do you also mean material?*

E.T. – Yes. Material is a potential for thought. That cigarette ash is a potential story. It's not a competition, it's completely by chance, but for me that cigarette ash opens up possible significations that aren't just to do with form...

[...]

B.M. – *[...] What matters to you today?*

E.T. – Simply to do something with my imagination and maybe, most importantly, create a symmetry between myself and the world.

Elmar Trenkwalder

Lives and works in Innsbruck, Austria

Elmar Trenkwalder is represented by Galerie Bernard Jordan, Paris

Selected exhibitions

- 2008 Frac Alsace, Sélestat
Salon du Dessin Contemporain, Paris
Enclosures, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen
- 2007 Galerie Bernard Jordan, Paris
Merveilleux, Château de Malbrouck, Manderen
- 2006 Le Creux de l'Enfer, Thiers *
Meccaniche della Meraviglia, Castello Bonoris, Montichiari (Brescia).
Céramique fiction, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Rouen
Elisabeth et Elmar Trenkwalder, Creux de l'Enfer, Thiers
Collections - permanent/provisoire, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Tourcoing
Contrepoint, de l'objet d'art à la sculpture, Musée du Louvre, Département des Objets d'art
- 2005 *Histoires d'Arbres*, Château du Tremblay
- 2004 *In extremis*, Printemps de septembre
- 2003 Musée-Château, Annecy*
Galerie Bernard Jordan, Paris
Maison de la Culture, Amiens*
Galerie Decimus Magnus Art, Bordeaux
Oberösterreichisches Landesmuseum, Linz
De singuliers voyages, Domaine de Chamarande
- 2001 *Rupertinum*, Salzburg Positionenreihe 21
Hospitalhof, Stuttgart
- 2000 Galerie Decimus Magnus Art, Bordeaux
DG Deutsche Gesellschaft für christliche Kunst, Munich
Komplementäre Raumvisionen Roland Fischer – Elmar Trenkwalder*
Galerie Albert Baronian, Bruxelles Daniel Schlier – Elmar Trenkwalder
- 1998 Galerie du Collège Marcel Duchamp, Châteauroux*
La Box, École nationale des beaux-arts, Bourges*
FRAC Limousin, Limoges*
Galerie Goldener Engl, Hall in Tirol*
- 1997 Galerie Jean-François Dumont, Bordeaux*
Ursula-Blckle-Stiftung, Kraichtal*
- 1996 Galerie Sechzig, Feldkirch
Galerie Krinzinger, Wien*
Galerie Altnöder, Salzburg
- 1995 Galerie im Taxispalais, Innsbruck*
- 1994 Galerie im Traklhaus, Salzburg*
- 1992 Galerie Altnöder, Salzburg
- 1991 Galerie Jean-François Dumont, Bordeaux
Galerie Sechzig, Feldkirch
- 1989 Galerie Krinzinger, Wien*, Innsbruck*
- 1987 Galerie van Aken, Köln
- 1985 Galerie Krinzinger, Innsbruck*
La Chaufferie, École des Arts Décoratifs de Strasbourg*

Selected bibliography

Peter Weiermair, *Elmar Trenkwalder*, Galerie Krinzinger, Innsbruck, 1985

Heinz Gappmayr, *Elmar Trenkwalder*, Galerie Krinzinger, Vienne / Innsbruck, 1989

Dan Cameron, Peter Weiermair, *Elmar Trenkwalder*, Galerie im Traklhaus, Salzburg, Galerie im Taxispalais, Innsbruck, Galerie Jean-François Dumont Bordeaux, Paris, La Chaufferie, Ecole Nationale des Arts Décoratifs de Strasbourg, Galerie Krinzinger, Vienne, 1994

Jacques Soulillou, *Elmar Trenkwalder*, « Trenkwalder-Transformation », Galerie Goldener Engl, Tyrol, 1998

Bernard Marcadé, Jacques Soulillou, *Elmar Trenkwalder*, Galerie du Collège Marcel Duchamp, Ecole Municipale des Beaux-Arts, Chateauroux, FRAC Limousin, Limoges, 1998

Jean-Philippe Vienne, Peter Weiermair, *Elmar Trenkwalder*, La Box, Ecole Nationale des Beaux-Arts de Bourges, 1998

Peter Weiermair, *Elmar Trenkwalder*, *Buch der Zeichnungen*, Allerheiligenpresse, 1999

Pierre-Lin Renié, Martin Hochleitner, Pierre Dourthe, *Trenkwalder WVZ 1091*, Musée Château d'Annecy, Maison de la Culture d'Amiens, Landesgalerie am Oberösterreichischen Landesmuseum, Jean-Louis Connan, Ecole d'Arts de la Communauté de l'Agglomération d'Annecy, 2003

Frédéric Bouglé, Peter Weiermair, *Elmar Trenkwalder, Elisabeth Trenkwalder, Sweet and sour*, vol. 1 & 2, Le Creux de l'Enfer, Thiers, 2006

Elmar Trenkwalder



WVZ 1349 ZEI 2007
Project for a sculpture for la maison rouge



WVZ 177 TRE 2004
Glazed terracotta, 85 elements, 520 x 390 x 390cm
IN EXTREMIS, Printemps de septembre in Toulouse, Espace EDF-Bacade, 2004
Photograph: André Morin

Andrea Blum, Birdhouse Café

This summer, la maison rouge has commissioned the American artist Andrea Blum (1950, New York) to create a café in its patio, an area open to the sky at the heart of the foundation.

For Andrea Blum, function is as important as form, and her work is as much architecture or design as it is sculpture: libraries that can be modular, mobile (*Bibliothèque mobile*, Marseille, 1997, *Mobile Institute*, Leeds, 1999) or floating (*Floating Library*, 2005), office space (Galerie In Situ Fabienne Leclerc, Paris), interiors (a collector's bedroom, apartments, private houses, hotels and guest houses) and numerous commissions for public spaces (fountains, rest areas, shelters, gardens) which she treats as though it were a domestic space. In her own words, "I try to highlight and confuse the differences between these sites in an attempt to promote a social breakdown of content and context."

For la maison rouge, Andrea Blum has imagined a café: a bungalow that stands on piles in the middle of the patio, which she transforms into an aviary.

Birdhouse Café (the project's name) is intended as an extension of the Foundation's own café, a social setting where people can meet over a drink or meal, and a place from which to observe and admire the birds as they fly around.

In a subtle switch, the observer becomes the observed: visitors sit perched inside the café, pecking at their food, while the birds fly "freely" around the patio. Not without a certain tongue-in-cheek humour, she turns the tables one more time by including in her project the glass-walled corridors of the exhibition space around the patio, where visitors gather to see what's going on.

The "situations and de-situations" she creates through this shift in point of view and function allow spectators to take a step back from themselves and open up to others.

Birdhouse Café is intimately linked to Andrea Blum's personal experience as a diehard New-Yorker who has always observed nature from her car as something "that should be seen from a certain distance and treated as a specimen."

I grew up in New York City and am a fifth generation manhattan-ite. Because of this, nature had always been an abstract, considered "not bad if seen from a car". I therefore regard nature as something alien, to be looked at from a distance and treated as a specimen.

*On occasion I have used 'natural' elements in my work as a human substitute, a social divider or simply as an optimistic presence. I feel that the animal kingdom, unlike that of us humans, is unmediated and not defined by the encyclopedic dictates of the pre-requisite pedigree, and therefore less complicated. I consider the natural world as *information* similar to a book, film or video. It is a material to be worked with—a material like any other.*

Birdhouse Café is a functional dining pavilion designed to occupy the central open-air vitrine for the summer months at La maison rouge. Surrounded by free flying birds, the café situates 'us' (the diners) and 'them' (the birds) in what essentially is a cage within a cage. This juxtaposition de-constructs the hierarchy of viewer and viewed and by so doing places 'us' in a type of cabinet of curiosities looked at by 'them', a theme which relates to many of the exhibitions of La maison rouge.

The pavilion is a six-sided screened structure connected to the building by a passage going from the interior dining area to the outside. Inside, is a counter (+ stools) for communal dining which mimics the structure's form. Elevated approximately 1:25m off the ground, the Birdhouse is now a referent to those used for child's play ---a magical space displaced from the daily routine with the diner perched amongst the trees.

« Birdhouse Café » – andrea blum 2008

Andrea Blum

Lives and works in New York, USA

www.andreablum.com

Andrea Blum is represented by Galerie IN SITU Fabienne Leclerc, Paris

Selected solo exhibitions

- 2008 Galerie IN SITU, Fabienne Leclerc, Paris
- 2007 *Gardens+ Fountains* Café MUDAM Museum Luxembourg
- 2005 *Hotel, Apartment, House, Nomadic House* Galerie Lumen Travo, Amsterdam, Pays-Bas
- 2004 *Slide Lounge*, Armory Show NYC / Galerie IN SITU, Fabienne Leclerc, Paris
- 2003 *Metropolitan Biography*, Le Crestet - Centre d'Art Contemporain*
Nomadic House & Designs for Living, Galerie IN SITU, Fabienne Leclerc, Paris
- 2001 *Utopie*, Art3 Valence, France
- 1999 *Mobile Institute 2 - Archive, theater, library*, Henry Moore Institute, Leeds
Video Viewing Station, Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporaneo, Séville
Mobile Institute 1- Office, exhibition space, theater, library, Galerie Lumen Travo, Amsterdam
- 1998 Centre D'art Contemporain, Auvers Sur Oise, France
- 1997 *Polder*, Afdeling Beeldende Kunst, De Paviljoens, Almere, Pays-Bas
- 1996 *Mobile Home*, Galerie des Archives, Paris
Universiteit Twente, Enschede, Pays-Bas
- 1995 American Center, Paris (installations dans l'espace public)
Public Affairs, Stroom, Center for Visual Art, La Haye*
Domestic Arrangement 3, Galerie Lumen Travo, Amsterdam
- 1994 *Domestic Arrangement 1*, Storefront for Art & Architecture, New York
Domestic Arrangement 2, Galerie Des Archives, Paris
- 1991 *Bain-Douche*, collaboration: Shirley Irons, Jeanne Silverthorne, Simon Watson Gallery, New York
Surveillance Chamber, New York Diary, commissaires : Ryszard Wasko & Zdenka Gabalova,
Institute for Contemporary Art, P.S.1, Long Island City, New York

Selected group exhibitions

- 2006 *Eldorado*, Fondation Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean Luxembourg
Monument Minimum, Château d'Avignon, Camargue
- 2005 *Gardens + Fountains*, « The Experience of Art », Pavillon italien, Biennale de Venise (commande)
Nomadic House, FIAC- Grand Palais - Paris
Beyond Narcissus, Dorsky Gallery, New York
- 2004 *Le Paris des Maisons Objets trouvés*, Pavillon de l'Arsenal, Paris
- 2003 *Books-Machine*, Colette, Paris, commissaire : Jean- Max Colard
Ma Petite Entreprise, Abbaye Saint André - Centre d'art contemporain, Meymac
Le Diable Evidement, Collection FRAC Bretagne, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Brest
- 2002 *Loveseat with Aquarium*, FIAC, Paris
LMX etape 3, Ecole Supérieure des Beaux-Arts du Mans
- 2001 *To the Trade*, DiverseWorks, Houston
Ambiance magasin, Abbaye Saint André - Centre d'art contemporain, Meymac
Exposition de groupe, Galerie IN SITU, Fabienne Leclerc, Paris
LMX etape 2, FRAC /PACA Marseille

- 2000 *Design 2000* - Espace Landowski, Boulogne Billancourt
Exurbia, Theresa Luisotti Gallery, Los Angeles, commissaire : Shirley Irons
Bike City, Stroom City Hall Den Haag the Netherlands
BabyBloom, Galeria Luisa delle Piane, Milan
- 1999 *Espace, modes d'emploi*, FRAC Bretagne
Design me a School, Academy of Visual Arts, Leipzig
- 1997 *The Private Eye in Public Art*, Nations Bank Plaza, Charlotte, North Carolina
- 1996 *Galerie Lumen Travo*, Amsterdam
- 1995 *Contemporaneously*, Castle of Baia, Naples
- 1993 *Transpositions*, Ferme du Buisson, Centre d'Art Contemporain, Noisiel*
- 1992 *A Marked Difference*, Maatschappij Arti et Amicitiae, Amsterdam, commissaires : Saul Ostrow/Peer Veneman.

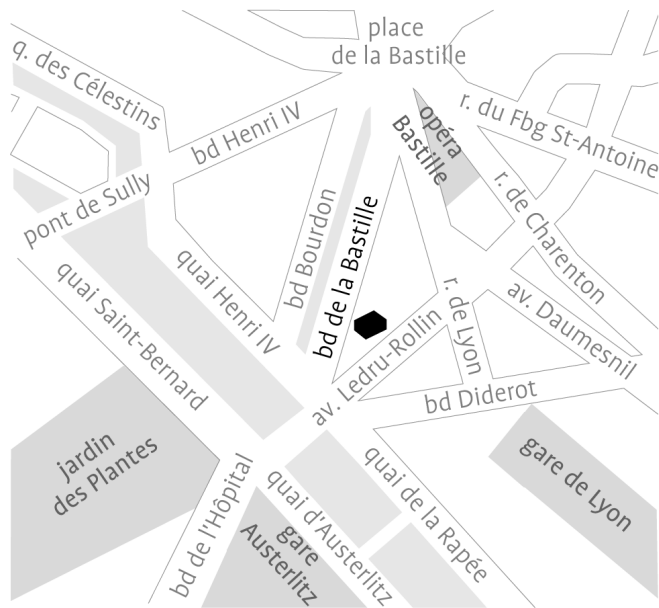
Selected public commissions

- 2006 *Plateau*, University of Pennsylvania & Redevelopment Authority of Philadelphia, Philadelphie
- 2004 *BikeHouse*, Stroom Center for Art & Architecture Den Haag, Pays-Bas
Drink /Sleep, Le Jardin des Deux Rives, Strasbourg
GreenHouse, Centre des livres d'artistes Saint-Yrieux La Perche, France
- 2003 *Living Spaces*, Institut des Jeunes Sourds et Aveugles de Marseille (IRSAM)
Fondation de France & Bureau des Compétences et Désirs, Marseille*
Nomadic House, ART3, Valence, prototype collection FNAC, Paris*
- 2001 *Bureau*, Art3, Valence
En Route, Université Paris 8, Saint Denis
Mobile Display Unit, Institut d'Architecture, Paris, production : Caisse Des Dépôts

Selected bibliography

- Andrea Blum, *Greenhouse*, Centre des Livres d'Artistes, St Yrieux La Perche, France 2005
- Andrea Blum, "*Metropolitan Biography*" Le Crestet & Michel Bavery Editions, 2003
- Andrea Blum, "*Nomadic House/Maison Nomade*", Art 3, Valence, 2003
- Andrea Blum, "*HOME*", publié par l'Observatoire, Marseille, France, 1997
- Andrea Blum, "*From the Other Side, Critical Issues in Public Art*", éditions Harriet Senie et Sally Webster, Art Journal, 1989
- Blum, A., Ess, B., Harrison, J. Vachon, G. co-editors of "WAC Stats", The New Press, 3^e édition, 1993
- Cecelia Casorati, *Contemporaneamente* avec la collaboration de la Fondation IDIS Napoli CUEN 1995
- Jouke Kleerebezem, *Andrea Blum: Domestic Arrangement / Public Affairs*, publié par Stroom Center for Visual Arts, Pays-Bas, 1^{ère} édition, 1997, 2^e édition, 1999
- Viet Stratmann, *Rond-point au mammouth*, édition PPT, 2003

> practical information



getting there

metro stations: Quai de la Rapée (line 5) or Bastille (lines 1, 5 or 8)

RER station: Gare de Lyon

bus n° 20, 29 or 91

accessibility

the exhibition areas are accessible

opening days and times

Wednesday to Sunday 11am to 7pm

late-night Thursday until 9pm

closed December 25th, January 1st and May 1st

admission

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

concessions: €12

free and unlimited admission to the exhibitions.

free or reduced rate admission to related events.