

GUILLAUME AIRIAUD, PORTFOLIO 2018

P. 3 : INTRODUCTION

P. 4 - 19 : ART WORKS 2018 - 2003

P. 20 - 21 : BIO & CV

P. 22 - 26 : TEXTS & INTERVIEWS

.....

Guillaume AIRIAUD
Böcklerstr. 2
10969 Berlin

hello@guillaume-airiaud.com
T +49 (0) 176 6136 2999
www.guillaume-airiaud.com

My work takes root in explorations of traditional handcrafts

It combines meticulous manipulations of various materials
with playful impressions of symbols and three-dimensional optical illusions

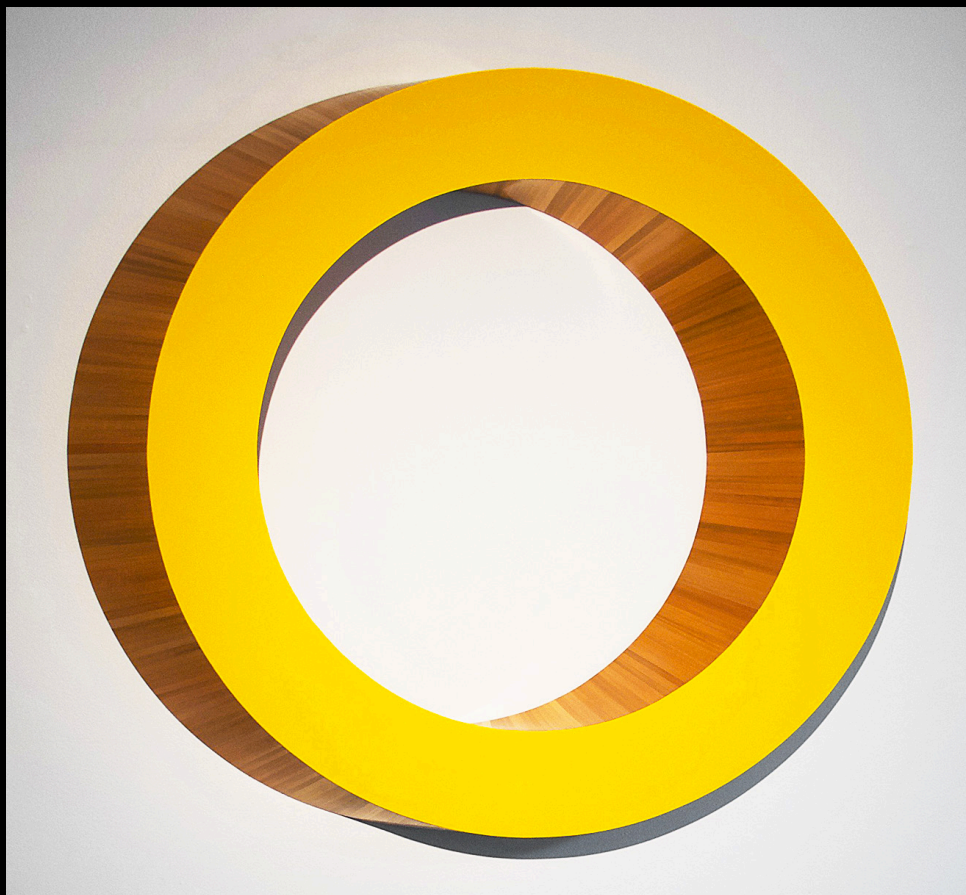
Using layering, perspective lines, displays of figurative or abstract motifs,
I build sculptures and pictures that evoke fictional and mystical storytelling

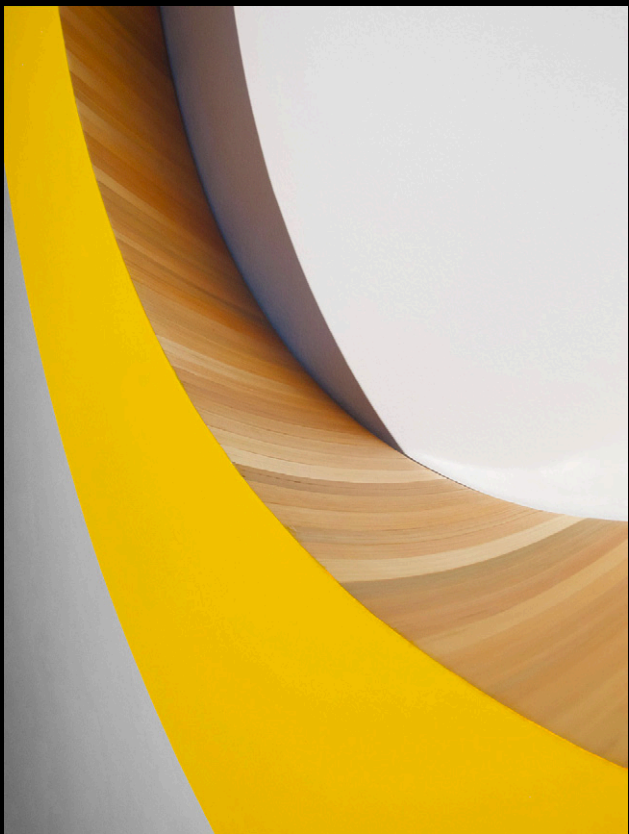
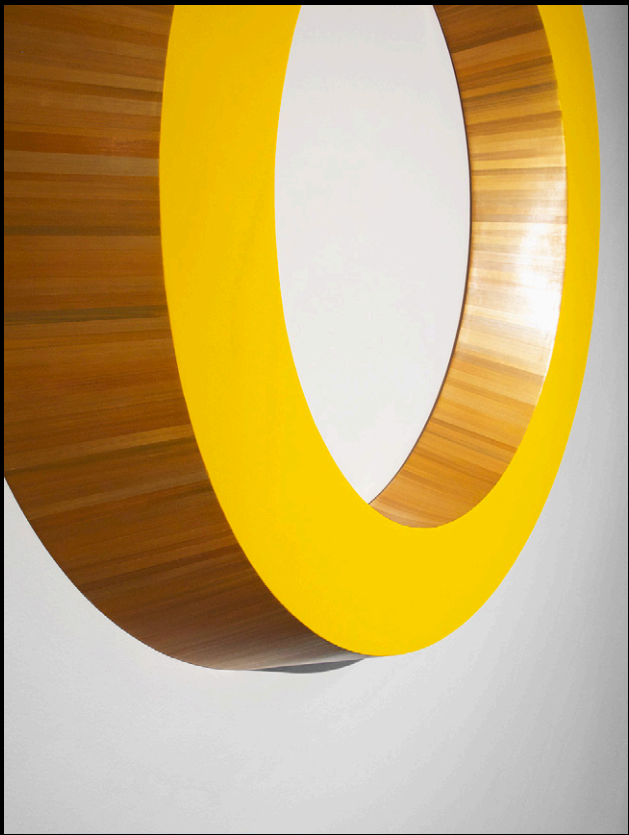
DEFEAT FOR THE SUNSET

Plywood, straw marquetry, acrylic

112 x 100 x 10 cm

2018





HISTOIRE DE COEUR

Hand screen printed canvas, embroidery, plywood

20 x 28 cm

2016



MEMORIES / Love Me Tender

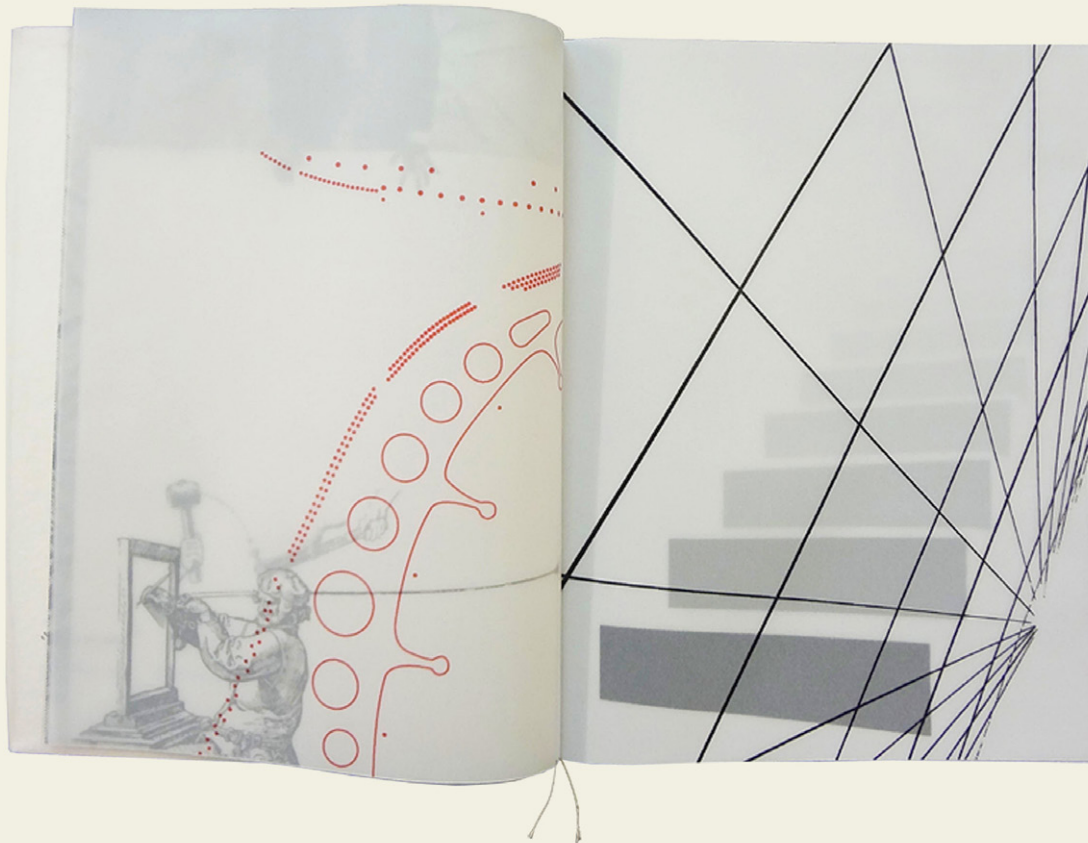
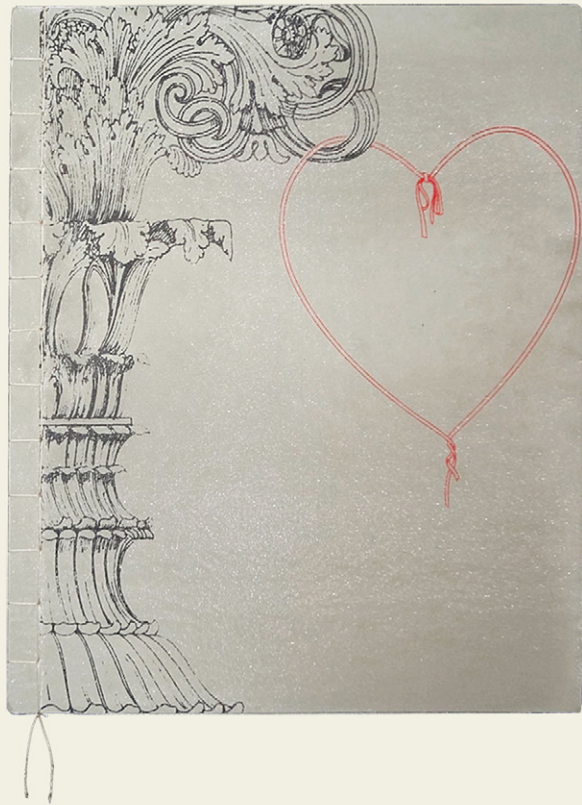
Hand-screen printed cover, organza, hand-made binding, laser print

21 x 26 cm

24 pages

edited in 50 exemplars

2012



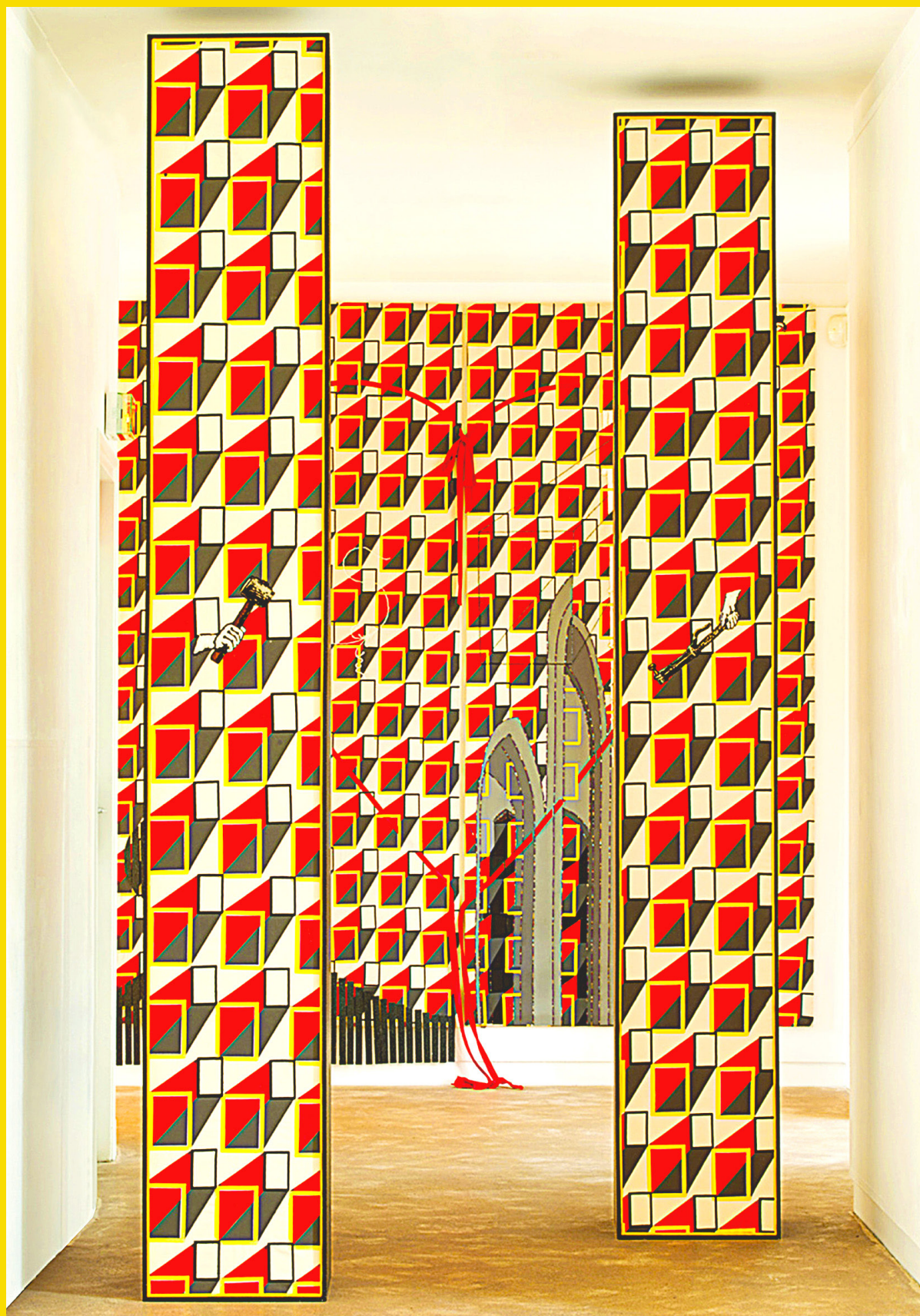
LOVE ME TENDER

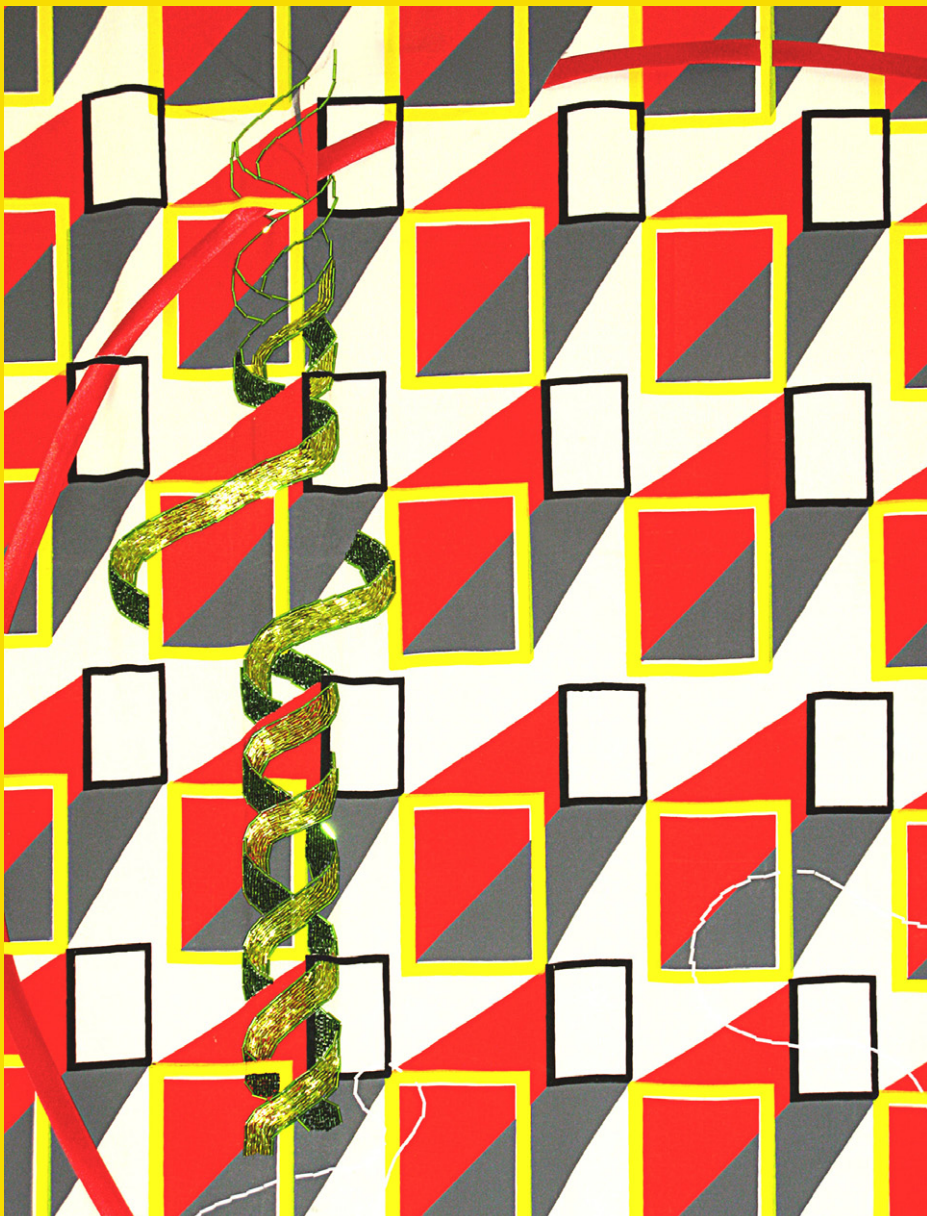
Hand-screen printed textile, pearls, ribbon, plywood, acrylic paint, spray paint "granit", paper

Columns: 285 x 41 x 41 cm

Canvases: 270 x 290 cm

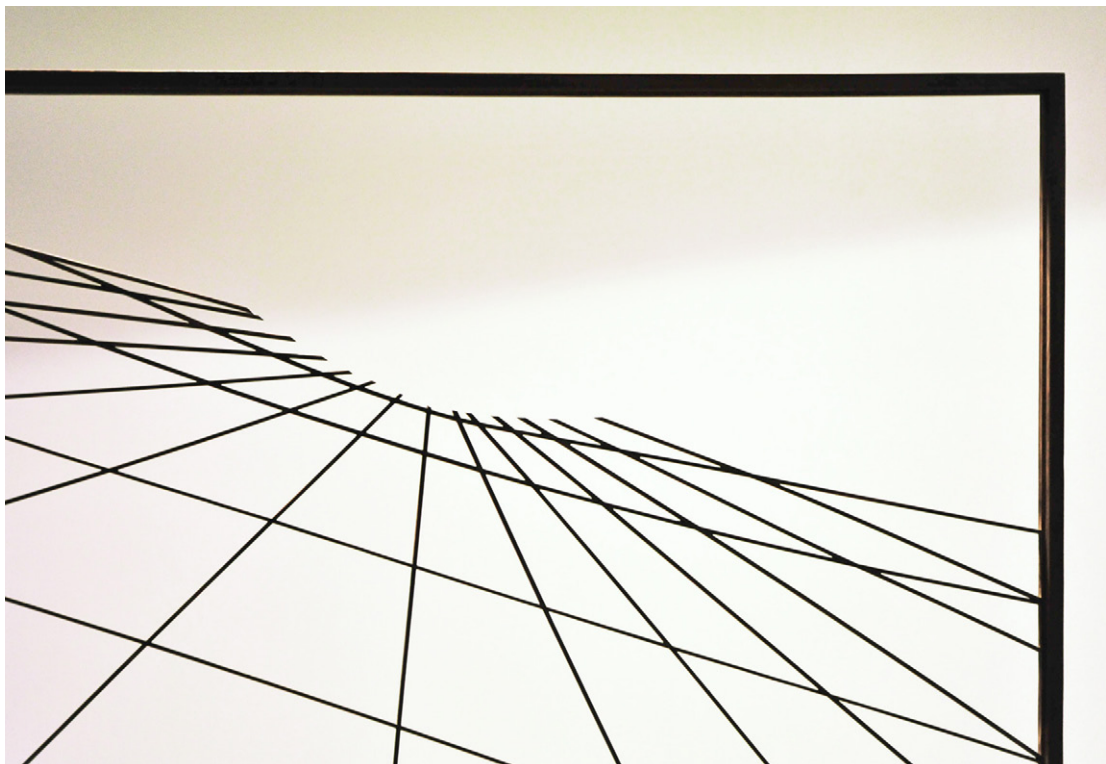
2012





INTO

Wood, steel
240 x 175 cm
2012



I USED TO LOVE YOU FOREVER #1

Hand-screen printed on veneer

92 x 70 cm

2012

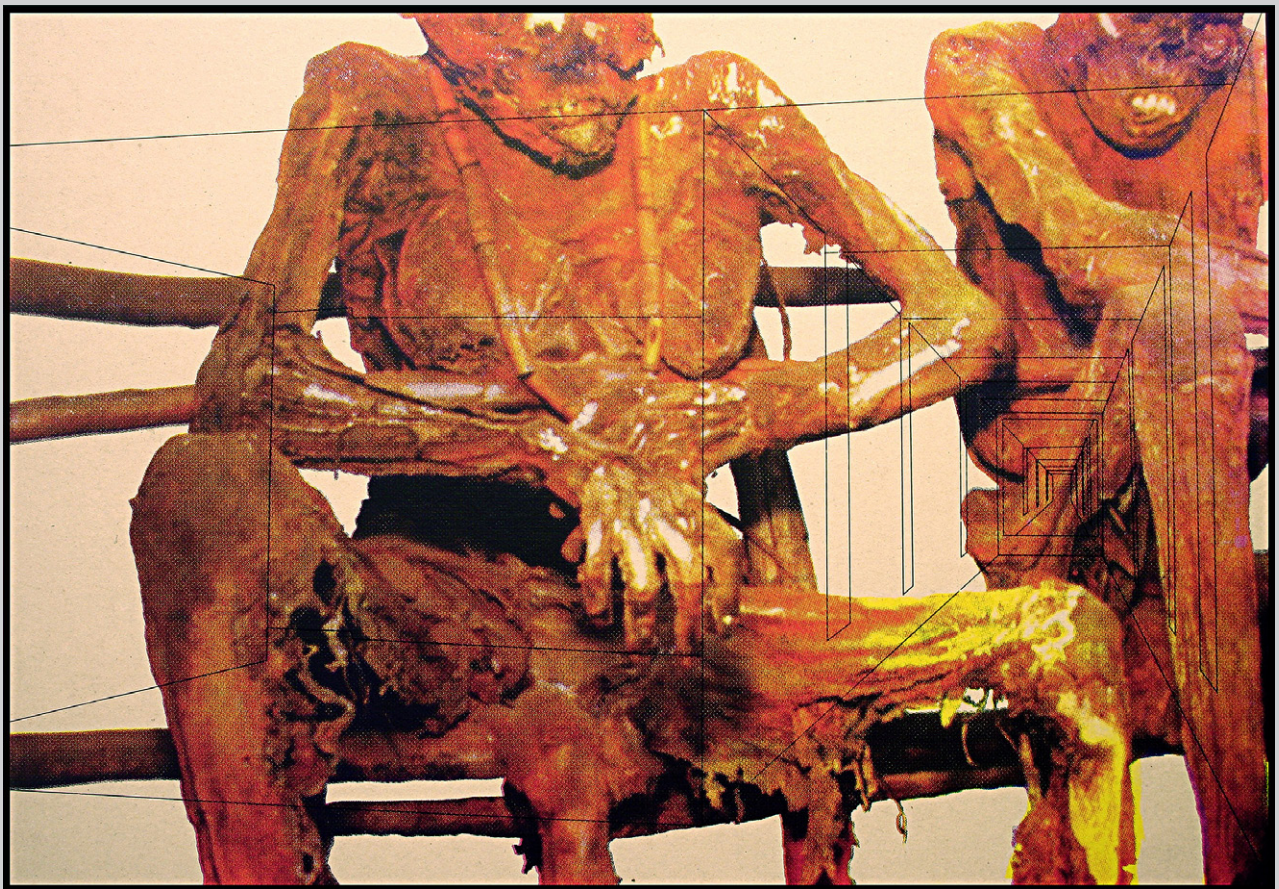


I USED TO LOVE YOU FOREVER #2

Hand-screen printed on cardboard

66 x 100 cm

2012



UP THERE

Fabrics & artificial leather

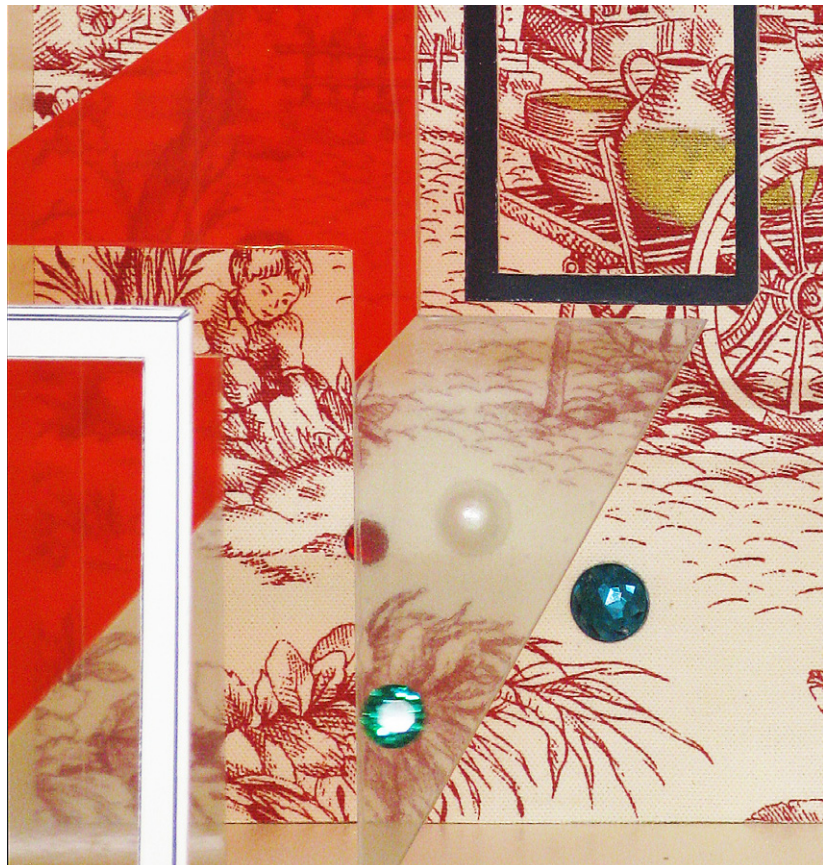
230 x 150 cm

2011



THEATER OF LAZYNESS #1

Textile, plywood, acrylic paint, pearls, plexiglas, paper
25 x 25 x 30 cm
2009



THEATER OF LAZYNESS #2

Textile, plywood, acrylic paint, pearls, plexiglas, paper
25 x 25 x 30 cm
2009

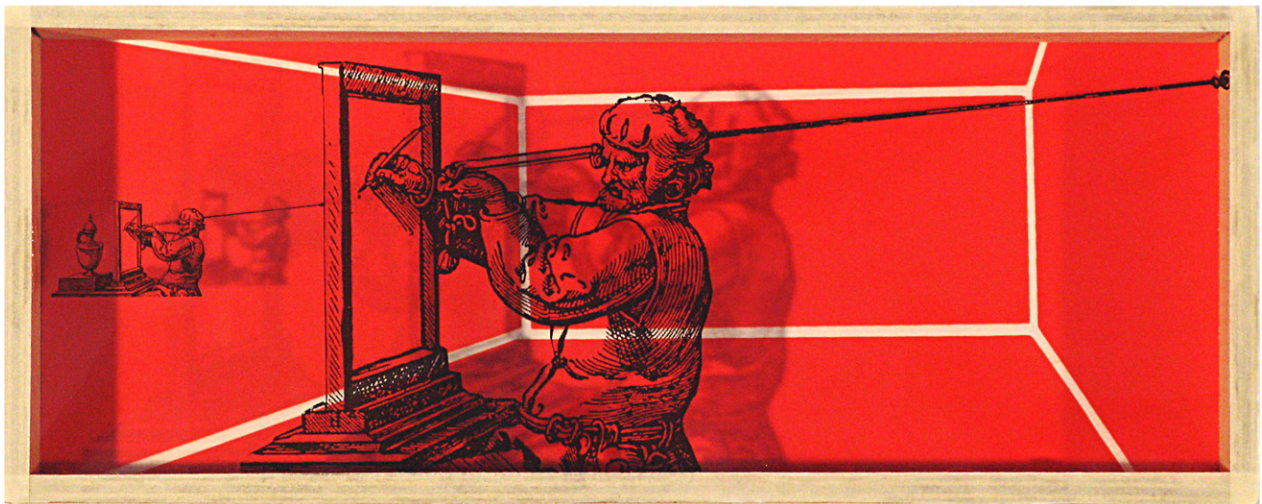


MODERN MAN AT CREATING RENAISSANCE

Hand-screen printed foil and paper

25 x 11 x 4 cm

2010



EPIC

Acrylic paint, plywood, textile, cow skull, pearls, sequins

Painting 240 x 170 cm

Horse 140 x 200 x 70 cm

2007





NO TITLE

Acrylic paint, wood

410 x 320 cm

2004



BEING SEEN WITHOUT SEEING

Performance in public space

2003



BIO

Born in 1983 in Nantes, France
Lives and works in Berlin since 2007

Studied Visual Arts at the Academy of Arts in Nantes, and Art History at The University of Nantes and Berlin's Freie Universität

Has exhibited internationally in several group and solo shows, done various collaborations in fashion.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

2018

Particules

Group show. Curator: Evor
Le Voyage À Nantes ; L'Atelier. Nantes (FR)

Faceless

Group show. Curators: Bogomir Doring & Brigitte Felderer
Gallery of the Austrian Cultural Forum. Berlin (DE)

2017

Pénates

Group show. Curator: Jean-Christophe Arcos
AzOnes. Nantes (FR)

My Icarus Complex

Performance. Creation: Troels Primdhal
HANGAR [56°18'40"N – 10°35'55"E]. Aarhus (DK)

2016

Only Lovers

Group show. Curator: Timothée Chaillou.
Le Coeur. Paris (FR)

Les Métiers Du Temps #2

Solo show. In collaboration with Hermès Watch and Hermès Paris.
Hermès Paris, 24 Rue du Faubourg St-Honoré. Paris (FR)

2015

Les Métiers Du Temps #1

Solo show. In collaboration with Hermès Watch and Hermès Paris
Hermès. Osaka, Tokyo (JP) Seoul (KR) Bangkok (TH) Shanghai (CN) New-York (USA)

2014

Hermès In Shanghai

Group show
Hermès. Shanghai (CN)

2013

Dispositon

Group show. Curated by Aude Cartier and Henri van Melle
Maison Des Arts de Malakoff. Paris (FR)

Legendary Are The Things Mundane When It Touches The Hand Of A Genius

Group show. Curated by Marta Czyz
Kordegarda National Gallery. Warsaw (PL)

2012

A Lapse Of Absence

Group show. Curated by Valérie Leray
Glogauair. Berlin (DE)

2011

The Face Of Jesus In My Soup

Group show. Curated by Lee Wagstaff
Rise Gallery. Berlin (DE)

Love Me Tender

Solo show
Rise Gallery. Berlin (DE)

Sample

Group show. Curated by Judith Wiedenhöft & Julia Wielgus
Lindenstrasse 35 Gallery complex. Berlin (DE)

2010

Hapiness Machine

Group show curated by Lee Wagstaff
Rise Gallery. Berlin (DE).

Tape Modern N°13

Group show. In cooperation with Heidestrasse Galleries and Halle am Wasser.
Tape. Berlin (DE)

EXHIBITION CATALOGUES

Faceless

De Gruyter Verlag Editions. 2018
Organized by Bogomir Doring, supported by Brigitte Felderer
In collaboration with Q21 at MQ – MuseumsQuartier Wien.

Disposition

Catalogue of the exhibition. French texts. 2013

A Lapse of Absence

Texts in english. 2012

CONVERSATION WITH TIMOTHÉE CHAILLOU

For the catalogue of the exhibiton «DISPOSITION», 2013

Timothée Chaillou : A device is a combination of different elements – as well as a mode of governance linked to a form of power. According to Giorgio Agamben “a device is, first, a machine that produces a subjective perspective.” Samuel Bianchini reminds us that “more precise than the word ‘installation,’ which is today tarnished,” he reclaims the meaning - a deployment in a specific space – but enriches it with a productive principle. As a spatial and technical combination, a device is a space to be entered, and at the same time a process to attend or to be part of.

In the exhibition Disposition, if only the question of device employed authoritatively or not by the artists counts, what are the issues of such a “spatial development”?

Guillaume Airiaud : I’m conscious that the spectator first encounters an artwork in a spatial manner; before looking at an artwork, we see it in the context of its exhibition. As I conceive and realize my pieces, I mentally project it in the environment in which they’ll exist and be physically appreciated. I feel I have given birth to the artwork from the moment in which the spectator can approach its device, and it seems to me that it works. The productions I did not intended as devices are for me studies, documents, genesis, etc.

TC : What is at the origin of this corridor with frames on its two sides that became your logo ? What does it symbolize?

GA : I created the logo about ten years ago. It was meant to become a sculpture that the spectator could enter. This image of a corridor between two frames synthesizes the idea of fiction, central theme of my research. It illustrates a beginning and an end and what is in between the two. I explore the mysterious “between” through my creations, as well as the entrance and the exit that show the artifice related to the fiction. In other words, there is no limit to what one can create, believe or conceive and the frame is the artifice that allows fiction to exist as a form. Finally, I never found it necessary to realize the sculpture, as its form already synthesizes a concept linked to the identity of my work.

TC : For what reason do you have this affection, this interest, in the perspective and primary forms ?

GA : As in my logo, perspective enhances the artifice of a point of view, in which the artist’s and spectator’s eyes are king. Perspective and primary forms fascinate me because they are contradicting the natural and thus relate to something mysterious. They are manifestations of what human beings can conceive.

TC : The backgrounds in Love Me Tender are realized with a pattern of your logo. You added a red ribbon in a

shape of a heart, some plastic stripes painted with a granite effect spray, a row of white glass pearls, a green caduceus, some white drips, some acanthus leaves, an eye, a perspective diagram and some outlines of gothic arches filled in with collages of papers. All those motifs are related to the embellishment, the decorative. The notion of decorative, since modernity, has always been subject of controversies. Matisse has never been afraid of the decorative and according to Lily van der Stokker “the decorative seems to be almost an obscene word in artistic terms – that’s the only thing that it cannot be. (...) I like decoration. The decorative patterns, the symmetry, the wallpaper and decoration of children’s rooms. Beauty appears strongly in it : it’s so seductive.”

GA : The decorative is present in our every day environment, and I tend to be inspired by the environment. The statement that an artwork is decorative comes when it doesn’t evoke a concept. I believe every form can be seen in a singular manner, so I consider that analyzing an artwork as decorative is the expression of an individual approach.

TC : What about the two rectangular columns? The anterior parts are realized with a pattern of your logo and the sides are painted with a granite effect spray. A hand is shown on the left column – body fragment – holding a mallet and on the right one, a hand is shown holding a tool that supports a nail. Can you tell us about those tools and their association? Is there an explicit virility in those hands firmly holding the tools?

GA : I haven’t previously thought of the virile hold on the tools. My knowledge about them came from my grand-father who was passionately dedicated to his activity as cattle trader. A hand holds the nail with the help of this tool between the animal’s two eyes and the other sinks it down with the mallet.

TC : According to Alessio Perticari, those “two columns introduce the theme of death.” What do you think?

GA : With the word death, French and many languages don’t dissociate the action of dying from the state of being dead. In other words, the access to the unknown from the unknown. I’m interested in this access to the unknown for being a source of mysteries, creations, beliefs, etc. and therefore, the start of a fiction. That’s the reason why I place those motives in foreground on two impressive columns like at the entrance of a temple.

TC : Into is realized out of wooden sticks assembled with notch joints, tainted with walnut stain and polished. Its steel feet are detachable, so that the frame can stand either vertically or horizontally. You talk about Into as being a screen – and we can also think about the perspective grids used in painting.

GA : Into is an image that became a sculpture, which can only have as background whatever is placed behind it. The grid is used in painting in order to frame the transfer of a three dimensional view into a two dimensional image. Into already incorporates a perspective and at the same time frames the view behind it. I see the combination as vision of a cosmic dimension.

TC : Red is a ubiquitous color in your production. Red appeared, as color produced by human beings, from the Paleolithic, 37000 years ago. In the Antiquity, red is the color of the gods, the nobility and clergy. From the 13th century, the pope and cardinals are dressed in red while demoniac forces are paradoxically painted in the same color. From the 16th century, red is considered immoral by Protestants who referred to the « great prostitute » of Babylon dressed in red. Red is the color that has the most impact on our physiological functions. On a psychological level it is associated with vitality, sexual impulse, fighting instincts and aggressive tendencies. Red is associated with heat, desire and passion. It evokes blood, card games, the matador's muleta or communism. It symbolizes life, joy, heat, power as well as prohibition, destruction, danger, anger or violence.

GA : I am not painter, and except for red, my palette is mainly due to the materiality of the elements I use and the search for harmony. Red is the only color which is present as a sign in my artwork. The proliferation of its meanings makes it elusive and its visual impact frontal. I associate it with the depth of the field like a contradiction. Red reveals this purpose in one of my first pieces, *Being Seen Without Seeing* (2003), in which I wear a red cubic box over the head that blocks me from seeing anything, and wander in the urban environment. To me, this piece illustrates the artist's attitude that distances himself from the real in order to impose a vision.

TC : I would like to establish a relation between two terms that can explain part of your production : kitsch and camp. The term kitsch appears at the end of the 19th century. Its sources are related to the German verb kitschen (which means to collect rubbish from the streets) and verkitschen (which means to sell off). It is intimately linked to the idea of the inauthentic, the excess and the bad taste. Pointing first at the artistic and industrial production of cheap objects, in the 20th century it was used to criticize the mass culture of the consumerist society. The kitsch doesn't erode the culture of elite anymore but it is rather accused of being a tool to manipulate the masses by reducing their cultural needs into easy gratifications offered by substitutes of the culture or cheap imitations of classic art. Kitsch swings between pejorative and affective meanings: kitsch is essentially a consequence of the taste of its observer. Whereas "camp asserts that good taste is not simply good taste; that there exists, indeed, a good taste of bad taste" (Susan Sontag). There is a certain degree of artifice and stylization in camp, a taste for exaggeration and falsity – which places its meaning close to one of kitsch. "Indeed the essence of Camp is its love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration. And

Camp is esoteric."

GA : Some of my artworks contain kitsch elements by focusing on the artificial aspect of sensations through the standardization of images. By placing the heart as central motif of *Love me Tender*, I explore the contrast between the excessive presence of this motif in our everyday life, which functions as a sign for passion, and the actual undefinable complexity of these passions. The arbitrariness of the sign that contradicts the imperceptibility of its real meaning, opens for me a large field of possible concepts and beliefs. A less recent piece, *Epic* (2005), refers to this artifice of sensations in mainstream and childish imagination: a giant postcard figuring a *Sunset on a deserted island* and a *rocking horse*.

TC : "To perceive Camp in objects and persons is to understand Being-as-Playing-a-Role. It is the farthest extension, in sensibility, of the metaphor of life as theater. (...) Camp introduces a new standard: artifice as an ideal, theatricality." In order to not reduce your installation into scenic props (used for concerts, operas or theater plays), which are other interpretations that are being evoked here?

GA : I often consider the spectacular aspect as essential in the dispositions of my artworks and willingly associate them to the staging. I explained that I create my pieces while projecting a vision of their spatial disposition; I forgot to specify that I always project a frontal vision. The perspective of composing a painting is always in focus. It is a pictorial approach, as it is often the fact in what forms a painting, a theater stage or a shop show window. Each of these references to the pictorial have their own properties and I think that my work can relate to them, but differs from them. My work is to appeal to the spectator's vision, as well mine. Not by identification, but by implication and in individual, sensible, conceptual, creative manners etc. The list is never-ending. One could also interpret my installations as references to ritual places, because the mystery, the spectacular and the iconic share a common aesthetic vocabulary.

TC : Kirstine Roepstorff explains that there is a form of loneliness that is expressed in your production. Is it an aspect that you wish to formally formulate?

GA : I am very touched that Kristine evokes this aspect of loneliness. I think it can be felt on different levels if one observes my artwork. On one hand, the technique that witnesses a patient labor, like sewing one by one thousands of pearls; on an other hand, the aesthetics of my pieces that mainly avoid representations of persons, with whom the spectator could identify himself, in favor of a device that tends not to focus on citations or references, and thus invokes a very personal universe.

24 ARTISTS TO WATCH

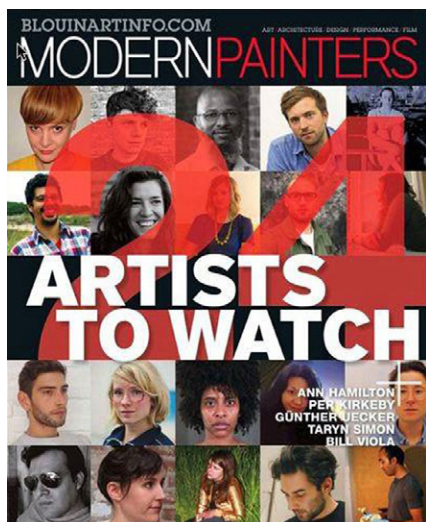
Modern Painters, December 2012

Born 1983, Nantes, France. Lives in Berlin.

«There is a certain kind of loneliness to Airiaud's entire body of work which touches me profoundly», says artist Kirstine Roepstorff. "I have a copy of his handmade book *Thoughts After the Research for the Project 'Love Me Tender'*," she continues. «It's very beautiful and poetic. He has a very precise, distinct way of working, using metaphors and storytelling elegantly.»

Airiaud's work process is rooted in his use of materials and includes experimentation methods, and it touches upon subjects as abstract as fiction, death, love, and play. «Patient handcrafting brings me to another level of excitement and inspiration», says the artist, who, apart from making books, works in sculpture, collage, painting, and drawing.

He recently collaborated with fashion designer Martin Niklas Wieser on a collection of garments. Airiaud produced some of the pieces in metal. "A major part of it is to create an environment to represent the vision of the project, which we are just starting to develop," he explains. "It may involve various discipline: installation, performance, video, photography, and so forth."



NO TITLE

By Alessio Perticari, 2010

Guillaume Airiaud's wide-ranging artistic craft – installations, sculpture, painting, marquetry, video and drawing – restates the importance of an intimate storytelling.

He approaches his work with a playful and sometimes mocking take on common symbolism and the belief in a rational order of things, setting forth new meanings by explicitly opposing the technique of perspective with the unmasking truth of its illusion. Through his ability to create a fictional space where mathematical proportions apparently reign, he builds a direct contact with the viewer that feels compelled to fill with personal imagination that illusion of formal perfection. The grid of sharp lines provides enough space for research and questioning, and thus the freedom of interpretation. Indeed, Airiaud explores the uncertainty of human perception not only in spatial terms but also in narrative ones, by building an aesthetic of fiction: in all his works, he emphasizes the arbitrary nature of the human mind that valorizes to an extreme degree a fictive beginning-and-end structure of time; thus, he encourages his viewer to use memory, imagination and feelings instead of a rational eye to view his stories, which are never precise, and therefore almost games.

In his images, which are rather theatrical stages, every element is meticulously chosen, among which the seemingly ornamental constituents are there to give a dream-like atmosphere. In his work titled "Epic" (2007) Airiaud presents a giant rocking horse with a cow skull as the head and a canvas of a tropical island as the background with the intention to build a world in which contrasting symbols are used to established thoroughly new ones—on the one hand the child like object, on the other, an image of death, while as background the common imaginary of a constantly dreamed vacation, cast fundamental questions to human existence but also give a new light to their physical being, i.e. the object itself, as if the rocking dead cow was now a mysterious relic of human imagination transformed in a collector's item with an independent taxonomy. For Airiaud, the cow-horse functions as both game and ambiguity, visually seducing the viewer into the work while providing a joyful setting that objectifies his symbols. This aspect of foregrounding the material presence of his work is a direct consequence of his love for objects, which also influences his choice of producing everything independently.

As Airiaud says, "different techniques make different narratives," that's why in the two marquetrys he has created, the epic is replaced by an implied mystical motif to create almost religious icons, yet we can never grasp the references because they are personal: the use of cold geometry, everyday objects like a table and a candle stick are juxtaposed to a gloved arm with an undefined object in its hands and golden rays. That implied mystical motif becomes explicit in "Cycle" (2010), a video installation with an archetypal figure of a fasci-

nating torero set in a four-meter large ring-shaped cloth with pins. Here Airiaud uses some stills from Rossellini's *Germania Anno Zero*, in which Berlin was razed to the ground, to focus on subject matters such as destruction, rebirth and subsequent feeling of giddiness and the need for creation.

Furthermore, the more metaphysical work "Playground" (2010) – a mixed-media that combines drawing, sculpture and collage – again highlights the fiction of perspective this time by showing the narrator of the work, represented by a self-portrait of Albrecht Dürer while painting, and its internal character, a small figure in the midst of the bigger structures. This reproduces the relationship between the artist and his viewer, making the very act of perception uncanny because of its foregrounding.

Airiaud's orientation toward practical and material interests is characteristic of many born storytellers. His artwork is a finished product that displays meanings and reifies new ones. His passion for handcraft is further demonstrated in his collaborations in fashion. For Giuseppe Virgone's 2009 fashion show, Airiaud realized the stage design and produced eight masks. The masks, evoking primordial creatures, were produced as jewels made of brass and organic elements, such as fish teeth, bones and feathers. The masks were also used as central accessories in several photo-shoots. The photos were also included in *Vice Magazine* and in portfolios of different photographers.

Guillaume Airiaud was born in Nantes, France and currently lives and works in Berlin. He has studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Nantes and at Free University in Berlin. Selected recent shows include: solo show "Epic" at Arial Project, Berlin; group show "N°13" at Tape Modern, Berlin; group show "Studio 54 & Guests" at The Forgotten Bar, Berlin. Collaborations with other artists include the 2009 group show "Surrender Dorothy" organized by Philippe Comtesse, in which he produced a wooden shrine with many references to the iconic movie *The Wizard of Oz*.

For his 2011 solo show at Rise Gallery, Airiaud is preparing a very large curtain, mixing silk-screen print patterns with embroideries, a custom-made limited edition compendium of essays and prints, and finally a video installation.

GUILLAUME AIRIAUD, GAMES OBLIGED

By Jean-Christophe Arcos, 2007

An aesthetic developed without concern for constricting itself in a unique/univocal language, but which plays with a solemn revelry of multiple references will disorient the (overly) well-informed gazer. Guillaume Airiaud offers to entangle us in this very jugglery, this jungle. Yet there is nothing that lends to confusion in the artist's operative precision. On the contrary, his talent for twisting catalogued, historic imagery inside a game open to disjunction entails taking what the eye knows, and turning it against itself. This demand imposed on the gazer requires a vast conceptual elaboration from the artist with little room for error.

His work is pervaded/pervades itself with Baroque syntagms ranging from the very obvious (the toile de Jouy) to the very simple (use of the classic perspective), to be inserted in an existing syntax bolstered by an aesthetic of discord. The same is true for the other depictions reunited in his installations, whether they borrow from the photographic mechanics represented by the eyepiece of Narcissus Vertigo, the vulgar (kitsch or chic) or the conceptual... Contiguity, omnipresent in his works, is manifested as only a seeming pattern of equilibriums. Above all, the artist/gazer bond put in perspective, the mobility of vocabularies and the reappearance of a close childish friend raise uncertainties about these befitting imaginations and thwart the potential of assimilation.

The recurrence of red, a mark of external dramatization (in the way a surface can be external), ironic dramatization, a (post-traumatic) post event, fosters a troubling strangeness in a scene that may have already been "played out." It is up to us to fill in the blanks (historia) of this missing tale: the stylistic markers are as much components of Clue. As such, this game introduces a model of interlocking elements: in this fictional epic that leads us to see what could easily be analyzed like quotes (Anthony Caro, Philippe Mayaux, rococo), lies the gazer's ability to liberate his/her gaze from references and borrowed materials.

How can we un-inform ourselves, how can we neutralize the usual analysis grids to glide inside a work that seems to offer us an accumulation of analysis grids? Like with Russian nesting dolls, the outer cover of quotes becomes a surface reflecting emptiness. The pursuit consists foremost of opening (ourselves) box after box, not of obtaining the final object.

Specifically, there is play involved in this act of boxing in: this sophisticated machinery at times reminiscent of the theater of Sade, sets a display of rituals no sooner desecrated, open spaces no sooner obstructed, vanitas no sooner juvenile... associations that are deliberately (and jubilantly) unstable.

We are confronted with a provocation of imbalances that neither sheds off lightness or seriousness: the fiction produced by Guillaume Airiaud unfolds like a space where things come together, fall apart and waver jealously. Perhaps this theatrical creation of an imperfect machine exploring the imperfection of the gazer thus forced to cast off a culture so solicited to the extreme, is exactly what constitutes the most Baroque aspect of these plays.