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The passage of time over matter is central to Michel Blazy's practice. Since the early nineties, the artist has been working with living entities, both artificial and natural, which are all equally subject to the supremacy of time and the multitude of triggers that impact the environment.

With *Multiverse*, La Loge reveals its potential as an animated place where matter can grow, germinate, transform and deteriorate. The exhibition comprises key elements from Blazy's studio practice including film, sculpture and installation, often composed of impermanent, transient materials like plants, mould, nutritional ingredients and everyday objects.

Throughout the course of the exhibition, the works develop independently from each other and beyond the control of the artist. In this untended multiverse, where things can freely overflow, the "eccentric movement of matter", as the artist describes it, lurks as a constant possibility. The notion of overflow sits at the heart of Blazy's practice, and also belongs to the history of this exhibition, a reiteration of a previous version of *Multiverse* that was flooded by a natural phenomenon during the opening in September 2018.

#### **A conversation with Michel Blazy**

**La Loge:** We often hear the expression "We are all made of stardust". All that surrounds us belongs to the same cosmic time; the absolute time, the time of the universe. There is something poetic in the fact that everything is directly connected to the universe and that all earthly creatures are fundamentally equal. Nevertheless, inequalities permeate every layer of society. How does your work capture or flatten relations, hierarchies and behaviours existing among different life forms?

**Michel Blazy:** For me, it is a poetic, but also a political relation. Regarding the relations between different beings, I try to explore other connections than the ones that are commonly accepted. When we talk about nature, we often refer to concepts like Darwinism, competition and adaptation, while there are many other relations we can find in nature, like relations of complementarity and cooperation. (For example, the work with snails and beer (*Le lâcher d'escargots*, 2018) make use of different types of relations, in a similar way the gardeners do when they use beer to attract snails and keep them away from their plantation – snails adore the smell of fermentation. They also like carpet, because it is

a surface that allows them to slide.)

There are many other relations that are not necessarily competitive ones. With some inter-species relations one species benefits from the other and the other way around. In my work, I am interested in discovering and acknowledging these other types of relations – of confrontation and complementarity.

**La Loge: You often use the concepts of “disruption” and “overflow”, two processes in which nature seems to become uncontrollable or, to put it differently, manifests its resilience.**

Michel Blazy: In fact, these ideas of ‘overflowing matter’ or ‘disruption’ refer to the moment when matter becomes autonomous and develops independently. The material literally flows off the edge of its container; it is no longer domesticated; it is as if all of a sudden, we have no control over it. Disruption and overflow are also allegories for human movement and behaviour, as in the case of a revolution, for example.

**La Loge: Even if matter escapes our control, you seem to be familiar with the behaviour of matter. Your work emanates an understanding and anticipation of certain life cycles – perhaps it is the result of long observations in your studio?**

Michel Blazy: Yes and no. The work emerges from something I am initially unfamiliar with – I am often surprised by what happens. I believe that the greatest successes are those which surpass the initial predictions. My knowledge about the work and the materials I use is empirical. I will place a plant in different situations and then study its behaviour. From these observations, the plant might evolve into a work or it might not. Then, once I’ve actually realised a work, I rediscover it, and I become aware of the broad range of possible reactions. The outcome will depend on the season or the geographical context. The works are produced by fluctuating circumstances and will adopt varying forms. My work is about getting to know all these variants. Of course, I cannot ignore that my experience goes hand in hand with a growing “mastery” of the work. With each installation, I note that things happen differently, and I build up know-how.

**La Loge: Time is a key actor in your plastic universe: there is the time of the studio, of the exhibition, of nature. Each artwork also has its own particular duration. The way the work transforms is not necessarily perceptible over the time of the exhibition, but becomes noticeable over a longer timespan or lifetime.**

Michel Blazy: I always work with the time of nature and the cosmos. The studio and the exhibition occupy the same time, which is the time of nature. At home, I can get some works started, and they can keep existing beyond my death. The plantations, like *La collection d'avocats (1997-)*, for example, come and go. They are exhibited for a certain period of time and then they return to the studio. I can explore longer times, times related to immediate things, but also times that are adapted to the duration of the exhibition. Some things are born and die during the exhibition – like the bags of lentils (*Buissons lentilles*, 2018). I consider these different temporalities as variable formats, like the format of the studio that can last indefinitely, or the shorter format of an exhibition. It is comparable to cinema which allows to create slowness, duration and length in a single minute.

**La Loge: Speaking of cinema, could you elaborate on your films *Voyage au centre*, 2002, *Green Pepper Gate*, 2002, *Le Multivers*, 2003 and their relationship to time?**

Michel Blazy: The films were made without a storyboard; one scene follows the other. A long period of observation and the construction of a set preceded the actual filming. The three episodes are shown together but were made consecutively. Sometimes the film stops on a background, and it is that image that determines the setting for the next episode.

The films deal with the origin of a universe, a biotope, a planet and the arrival of life. The films show materials that move, transform and dry up. The flora appears with the molds; with the insects that come to lay eggs, the fauna appears. It is the fabrication of a macro world based on our consumption.

**La Loge: You describe your films as cinema. Why?**

Michel Blazy: It is cinema because it employs cinema codes: tracking, anticipation, subjective shots, the breathing behind the camera. We feel the observer as an eye that wanders around in this world. There are also codes of painting and landscape: successive shots; a background that resembles a mountain, followed by a background that looks like a sky. It seems like we are walking through a landscape.

**La Loge: You referred to your collection of avocados, which you started growing in 1997. At La Loge, the trees are distributed in several rooms in the building, including the office where our team works in close proximity with them. How**

**do you define your relationship with those trees?**

Michel Blazy: From the beginning I have shown avocado trees in my exhibitions. It was important in relation to my gesture as a sculptor - not a creative gesture but one that accompanies nature. My gesture is closer to that of the gardener than that of the sculptor. The gardener does not let plants grow, the plant grows automatically. The gardener is only present to observe and encourage the plant. He provides the optimal conditions for the development of the plant. My exhibitions are often like gardens: you are confronted with beings in evolution, there is space and there are perspectives. Just like a garden, the exhibition changes over time.

My collection of avocados has been around for more than twenty years, it has grown from avocados that I have eaten and which I bought at the supermarket, an industrial, highly standardized context. The avocados are hybrid species, they have never reproduced, never borne new fruit. They are not products that come from nature, and yet they are living beings. The ultimate goal of this collection is to liberate the avocado trees, put them back in the ground, make a forest and place them back in the cycle they once came from. As with the carrot mash, I put them in touch with the cosmos again, a time that differs from that of consumption.

**La Loge: You often work with ordinary containers in which food is stored, composted or where it deteriorates. Dustbins (*Fontaine de mousse*, 2012), plastic bags (*Buissons lentilles*, 2018) or fridges, for example. Why do you show these every day, rather unpleasant objects?**

Michel Blazy: This work is really part of life. My personal lifestyle is the same as everyone else's. It consists in doing the groceries, putting them in the fridge. Like all other living beings, I consume energy and produce waste. All the things I use - whether these are consumer goods, a fridge or a dustbin - are related to this everyday life. The computers I use in my work also once belonged to my everyday life. Let's say that I deal with all these materials and objects as a consumer first before using them as an artist.

My work is also a reflection on how I live my life on this planet, on what I consume, on the waste that I produce.

Once an expired product leaves the fridge and enters the studio, it is linked up again with a time that is different to the time of consumption. It is placed in a different temporality; reconnected to the cosmos through mould that

forms; through its confrontation with animals; through everything that happens to it.

**La Loge: Nature is not dependent on human beings to exist, while humanity, on the other hand, is dependent on nature to survive. It's quite clear (except to climate skeptics) that through its actions, humanity will cease to exist. In the meantime, however, it is an ethical imperative to curtail environmental and climatic injustice in order to minimize pain and sufferance for humans and nonhumans alike. Your work does not seem to condemn human action but is rather showing what Janet Bennett describes as "the network of forces affecting the situations and events".**

Michel Blazy: I personally think that our tendency to separate nature from mankind is a way to ignore the ecological system. In my opinion, it is not a good approach, because we are part of a same ecosystem. The idea of protecting the planet is something that puts us in the position of the protectors, while in fact we are the torturers. The planet is not in danger, but humans are. As far as the planet and the living are concerned, there will indeed be less biodiversity, but it will always revive. Because it has always re-emerged, and even after a nuclear disaster it will. Except that man may not reappear. My position is not to say that it is absolutely necessary to protect the planet, I say that we simply have to open our eyes to see that we are disappearing in the same way as other endangered species.

**La Loge: Beyond its political and ecological positions, your practice is primarily sculptural in the sense that it focuses on form, material, but also on construction, craft, physicality and time.**

Michel Blazy: My sense is indeed that it is sculpture. I am interested in the aging of the material. I very soon realized that I was interested in the lifespan of sculptures and when you focus on the life of objects, the model is the living things and is not an object anymore. Even though, on a formal point of view, it may look like sculpture, the model is the living being. It is somewhat similar with what I said before, I consider my works to be living beings that I get to know, and I look at their reactions in different situations.

**La Loge: How have you approached the exhibition at La Loge? The show comprises a series of autonomous sculptures, which are worlds in themselves, with their own time.**

Michel Blazy: I started off from the idea of overflow or what

I call the "eccentric movement of matter", a movement that starts from the centre and proliferates. It is the process of life that escapes from the centre and grows outward. I wanted to bring together very different materials and forms that evoke the same movements [*débordement en dérèglement*], while being in completely different temporalities.

There are many forms that have started off, which were initially experiments that would not necessarily have succeeded. After a while, after two years, I realize that it produces a form that is not premeditated at first. When I am working in the studio, experiments are not necessarily intended to end up in an exhibition hall, there are plenty that are not shown, that do not go beyond the garden context, and that cannot be shown because they are not moveable or repeatable in the time of the exhibition.

### **Biography**

Born in 1966 in Monaco, Michel Blazy lives and works in Paris. Solo exhibitions comprise *We Were the Robots*, Moody Center for tge Arts, Houston, 2019; *Last Garden*, Le Voyage à Nantes, Nantes/FR, 2018; *Pull Over Time*, Art : Concept, 2015; *Bouquet Final 3*, National Gallery of Victoria; *Melbourne White Night*, 2013; *Le Grand Restaurant*, Frac Île-de-France, Paris, 2012; *Débordement domestique*, Art : Concept, Paris, 2012; *Post Patman*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2007. In 2008 he was nominated for the Marcel Duchamp Prize, and his work has been collected by numerous public collections including The National Museum of Modern Art – Centre Pompidou; the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA), Tasmania; the Museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris; the New Museum of Monaco; Les Abattoirs, Toulouse and several regional funds for contemporary art. Michel Blazy is represented by Art : Concept in Paris.

## Works in the exhibition

### **Ground floor**

#### **Temple**

*Amibes murales*, 2018  
plaster, cotton, wallpaper glue, food coloring  
Variable dimensions

*Buissons lentilles*, 2018  
Garbage bag, cotton, water, lentils  
Variable dimensions

*Fontaine de mousse*, 2012  
Waste containers, bath foam, water pump  
Variable dimensions

#### **Hall**

*The Party*, 2009  
Video: color/sound, 10'  
Courtesy of the artist and Art Concept, Paris  
La pointe Chaudière, Le Martinique, 2009. © ADAGP Michel  
Blazy 2009, Production: Frédéric G. Guilbaud and Pierre  
Lefebvre, thank you to Marie-Bénédicte Majoral.

#### **Corridor**

*Pull Over Time*, 2018  
Phones, plants, water  
Variable Dimensions

#### **Basement**

*Amibes murales*  
2018  
Plaster, cotton, wallpaper glue, food coloring  
Variable dimensions

*Pull Over Time (plantes objets)*  
2018  
Printer, videorecorder, DVD-player, plants, water  
Variable Dimensions

*Voyage au centre*,  
2002  
video: color/sound, 11'43''

*Green Pepper Gate*,  
2002  
video: color/sound, 12'04''

*Le Multivers*

2003

video: color/sound, 9'55''

**Office, second floor and terrace**

*Collection d'avocats*

1997 –

Avocados trees, soil

Variable Dimensions

*Fontaine, 2017*

Elephant grass, vodka bottle, water

**Acknowledgments**

Our gratitude goes  
to Michel Blazy for a fruitful dialogue and collaboration  
All works in the exhibition have been generously made  
available by the artists except when mentioned otherwise.

Thank you

to Irek Starsiak assisting us and Michel Blazy in the  
installation of this exhibition

to Galerie Art Concept

**The team at La Loge**

Team: Giulia Blasig, Laura Herman, Anne-Claire Schmitz

Visual identity: Antoine Begon, Boy Vereecken

Text and interview: Michel Blazy, Laura Herman

Translations: Anne Brunet, Steven Tallon

Installation team: Benjamin Jaubert, Arthur Jules, Nicolas  
Moreau, Ernesto Sartori, Irek Starsiak

Audio & video: Ludo Engels

**Opening hours**

Thursday – Friday – Saturday, 12:00 to 18:00

Free entrance. Visit our website for more details about our  
programme and events.

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La Loge is a privately initiated non-profit association  
founded by architect Philippe Rotthier. La Loge is  
supported by Philippe Rotthier Foundation, Flanders State  
of the Art, and First Sight, La Loge's community of engaged  
individuals and organisations.