



Kluisstraat 86 -
rue de l'Ermitage
B-1050 Brussels

+32 (0)2 644 42 48
info@la-loge.be

Drawn by her interest in history and architecture and by the ambiguity emerging from modernist utopias, Belgian artist Sophie Nys travelled to Rio de Janeiro in January 2012 to shoot the film *Parque do Flamengo*, a semi-documentary whose protagonist is the park of the title, and particularly the work of Brazilian landscape architect, Roberto Burle Marx.

At once a painter, a sculptor, a poet and a botanist, Roberto Burle Marx is known as one of the finest landscape architects of the twentieth century. His work combines the knowledge of tradition and a modernist relation to composition with a sensual and plastic approach to nature.

The Parque do Flamengo was designed between 1954–59. It is seven kilometres long, with a total area of 1.200.000 m². It unfolds as a complex composition, providing space for expressways, an artificial beach, benches, overpasses, tunnels, museums, monuments, recreation and above all, more than 1000 plants and trees. According to Rossana Vaccarino, Burle Marx believed that the collection, identification, propagation, and re-composition of Brazil's flora in urban parks in such large numbers and striking compositions would eventually help turn the wilderness of Brazil's endangered environment into an intimate experience that everybody could understand, value, and, therefore, possibly also protect.

Sophie Nys' *Parque do Flamengo*, which has its Belgian premiere at La Loge, is a 45-minute long uncut travelling shot which captures the whole of the park as an isolated entity. The camera crosses the space from end to end at a walking pace, the stroll's route following the park's curving and sensual lines. The film is a physical and plastic portrait of the place, a recording of a living, breathing space where culture and nature merge.

Musician Arto Lindsay composed the soundtrack for the film using the list of plants featured in the park as the starting point for the score.

A selection of these same plants are also featured in the show (basement of La Loge), but in their most minimal form: in the photograms of the seeds.

The seeds of tropical plants Sophie Nys used are in fact from the collection of the National Botanic Garden of Belgium. Commonly known as Meise's '*plantentuin*', the National Botanic Garden of Belgium benefits from an extraordinary collection that, surprisingly, has a Brazilian focus. If this is so, it is because the Belgian government acquired, in 1871, the noted *Herbarium Martii*, which contained about 300 000 specimens. Von Martius, who started the herbarium, was an illustrious botanist and the greatest contributor to the gigantic *Flora Brasiliensis*.

Sophie Nys produced the photograms of the seeds in the darkroom of the National Botanic Garden of Belgium.

Next to the vitrines displaying photograms, one can see a video of tree turtles strolling around the garden of *The Glass House* in São Paulo designed by the architect Lina Bo Bardi in 1951.

Faithful to her artistic practice, Sophie Nys develops a project that, under a minimalist conceptual rigour, succeeds in capturing the poetry and the absurdity of nature in a frame. Never objective but always precise, Sophie Nys' work discards historical and scientific linearity in favour of an approach based on intuitive research and free associations. As a whole, the exhibition *Parque do Flamengo* appears as a non-exhaustive constellation of forms and materials, explored through plural lenses: the sculptural, the narrative and the historical.

List of works, object & documents

Temple:

Sophie Nys
Parque do Flamengo, 2012
HDV film
45 min.

Lobby:

Untitled, 1867
Cecropia
Courtesy of the National Botanic Garden of Belgium

Untitled, 1867
Theophrasta imperialis Gleniou
Courtesy of the National Botanic Garden of Belgium

Untitled, 1867
Cecropia
Courtesy of the National Botanic Garden of Belgium

Corridor:

Parque do Flamengo
Plano Geral
1:1000
91 x 450 cm
print
Courtesy of the Escritório Burle Marx

Drawing for the Aterro da Gloria Garden in Parque do Flamengo
Reproduction of a drawing by Roberto Burle Marx
from the book 'The Tropical gardens of Burle Marx' by P.M. Bardi
p. 146, illustration 209

Basement:

Sophie Nys
La dormance des graines, 2012
Series of photograms
30,5 x 40,5 cm

Sophie Nys
The glass house, 2011
8 mm film transferred to dvd
3 min. (loop)

Sophie Nys (b. 1974, Antwerp), lives and works in Brussels and Zurich.

The exhibition *Parque do Flamengo* is part of the Brussels festival Design September. More information on www.designseptember.be

This exhibition was made possible thanks to the collaboration of the National Botanic Garden of Belgium and the Escritório Burle Marx.

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Complementary program

A series of events bringing the issues inherent to Sophie Nys' project into perspective will be held over the course of the exhibition. The series will feature a concert by composer and musician Arto Lindsay, a lecture by architect Kersten Geers, a lecture and workshop by cultural agent and independent curator Pablo Leon de La Barra and a lecture by historian and researcher Denis Diagre, of the National Botanic Garden of Belgium. Stay informed of our activities by visiting our website or subscribing to our newsletter.

Publication

Lyrics for Arto Lindsay, 2011
250 copies
12 □

Limited edition

Sophie Nys
Speciosa, 2012
Photogram

On the occasion of this exhibition, a limited edition of 10 photograms by Sophie Nys is available for sale. Although part of a series, each photogram is unique.

For more information, contact the reception desk.