

BAPTISTE DEBOMBOURG.

idealistic troublemaker

The combination of working with very unusual materials (from cigarette stubs to bridge bars) and filling his visions with content in a time where it's rather untrendy to be opinionated and outspoken... sure has earned Baptiste Debombourg a special place in today's elaborated art world. Lodown took the chance for a little chat with the extraordinary French artist for a hop and skip down memory lane while taking a jump into the future.

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Baptiste, were you always interested in installation/ construction art or was that something you put your focus on while studying in Lyon? I've always liked to drivel (absurdity), wonderful driveling, do what's forbidden just for the sake of doing it, and feel the adrenalin in my body until the final point. The notion of "beauty" in the nonsensical is very important...it gives it almost a heroic dimension. Without beauty's worth, this idea has absolutely nothing. You need imagination, style, and you must want to take risks. So I actually entered this artistic world by chance. I wanted to continue this path for two main reasons: to have fun, and to get away from all the rules in life that society imposes. It is so exciting to break these rules. For me, art has always been a way to escape from these rules—first the ones from my parents, the ones in school, and then the ones in society. When I am talking about "breaking the rules", I do not mean to destroy anything. I am talking about becoming free, having a true personal existence, totally independent from the rules or stupid measures that society implicitly demands. The artist Philippe Ramette said "Be the hero of your own life", I would add, "With no story there's no hero". So build your own story and you'll become the hero of it! My early experiences in the art sector were quite formal; I painted. Then I promptly realized that format was limiting was making me unhappy, since it was another restriction of my expression. Instead, sculpture or three-dimensional work naturally appeared to be the best way for me to express myself, also because we are surrounded by and co-exist with objects and architecture, as they share our living spaces. Architecture also represents an issue for a debate and an important reference in my work. The Beaux Arts (the official French university of arts) just taught me that the art world is a tainted one... but that was no surprise.



TRIUMPHAL ARCH
DISPOSABLE MONUMENT, CARDBOARD BOXES, GLUE, 530X450X230CM

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I find it fascinating that a lot of your work isn't only impressive in scale and detail but made from everyday materials...I was wondering if you chose your "tools" to overcome the elaborate codes of the art world? Overall, art is a human expression, and as far as I'm concerned I don't care at all about these rules. What is really important is to have a well-adjusted and hard-hitting expression! I am only interested in items and materials that are provoking or holding our acts.

To me your work, like all good art, is very open to interpretations... on the other hand you add a very precise periphery to your body of work, like how many hours it took to execute the piece from start to finish. Why this contradiction (well, if there's any)? Is it perhaps, centered around feeding a discussion about "value"? What if I was the first artist paid accordingly to the numbers of hours that it required to produce a piece of art? We are living in a society where wage is calculated accordingly to the number of hours worked—a kind of professionalization and industrialization for everything which does not let things happen by chance. I cannot take this obsession seriously, I'm talking about this idea of control of the men on other men or things. This philosophy is the opposite to the one of life... ..

Over the last decade in particular art is only recognized as such when there's a price tag added to it... would you agree that the art world did become this double-edged sword, where the idea of being a libertine does mainly exists on paper only these days? Before anything else I am a fascinated seeker—like a scientist I totally commit myself in the chore and I try to give it a frame when I deem it necessary to present it. From the beginning there has been constraints for everything, the art market being an economic reality, is (indeed) no exception. The idea is to accept these constraints and to analyze them in order to integrate them in order to react with intelligence. Being free in your work is a choice that is made a long time before everything.

The Japanese director Shinya Tsukamoto once told me in an interview that he's only able to find/see real beauty not in movements like deconstructionism but in destruction... your later work deals a lot with destruction as well, so I was wondering if you'd share his point of view? I am not interested in the materials themselves, they are just witnesses, what is really important is the gesture. Destruction like construction is a human expression, a paradox of life, in the sense that it is capable of good and evil. My personal point of view is that destruction is inevitably linked to repair... I confront them. It is more or less like a scar, a mark of a memory, of something felt in the past, sending back to temporality. Destruction is also indirectly a reappraisal of things, because evidence does not exist, thus everything must be called into question.



HELLS ANGELS
(A COLLABORATION WITH LIONEL SABATTÉ)
PIGEON CRUSHED ON THE ROAD, TAXIDERM, ARTIFICIAL FEATHERS, WOOD, FRAME, GLASS, 60X80CM
(DÉTAIL VIEW AND ALL VIEW)



TURBO WOOD INSTALLATION, VARIABLE SIZE, 320 X 730 X 300 CM

“Beauty” is something completely different. I would say that nowadays we want more “truth” than “beauty”, because the “beauty” can be trivial and/or superficial... whereas the “truth” may be the “beauty”, the “genuine”.

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This might be a rather random question but I would like to ask you how you chose your topics since you work in a pretty wide range...is it mainly about intuition or do you have the tendency to lose yourself in research?

I am particularly alert with what is around me and I am a subtle observer combined with a lot of curiosity. I am more interested in life, and in people.

I definitely agree with a famous quote from Robert Filiou: “Art is what makes life more interesting than art!”

I consider my artistic pattern like a meeting vehicle, a way to link sectors that usually ignores each other, the so-called “noble” and “popular” cultures for example.

And for me it is also a way to examine the position and the function of the current art.

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We tried to do this little Q&A a few weeks ago already, but you were terribly busy with a new project...please tell me a bit about what you’re working on at the moment and about what the cards are holding for Monsieur Debombourg for the rest of 2010?

A lot of projects, I cannot complain. Right now I am presenting an exhibition with Lionel Sabaté until April 30th. The exhibition is in Paris at the “Galerie Patricia Dorfmann” and is called Quelques secondes roses* (*a few pink seconds) I am also preparing a personal exhibition in Sarajevo at the Duplex/10m2 Art Center where I will be presenting a new cycle of architectural drawings (TDX) representing weapons used during the Balkan War that are becoming plans of residential architecture. And I am also work on an installation in situ.

The exhibition is a personal project initiated in partnership with the city of Paris, the Patricia Dorfmann Gallery, the Center of Arts, The Duplex, and the association OGBH of Jovan Divjak (association for war orphans).

This exhibition is particularly explosive; three years after my first solo-show and first Turbo also. And it takes place in Sarajevo, the capital I love in the geographical center of a reunified Europe, and a city that seems to be alive in opposition to the drowsy cities of Western Europe.

Other projects will then follow in France: another solo-exhibition in September in “Interface”, which is an associative center for modern art in Dijon. There I will present one project that will require extensive preparation, but also other art pieces and mediums.

I will also take part in some collective projects in France, The Hague (Holland), Cologne (Germany), and in fairs where my gallery is represented in France but also in Basel (Switzerland). Often times, projects are come from other projects.

FYI: the cultural events I’m partaking in are regularly updated on my website.

WWW.BAPTISTEDEBOMBOURG.COM

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WORDS: FORTY



HELLS ANGELS DÉTAIL VIEW
(A COLLABORATION WITH LIONEL SABATÉ)
PIGEON CRUSHED ON THE ROAD, TAXIDERM, ARTIFICIAL FEATHERS, WOOD, FRAME, GLASS, 60X80CM

BELOW CLOCKWISE:

BELIEVABLE
FROM THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY SERIE, CIGARETTE BUTTS ON RAIN POOL, INSTALLATION, DOCUMENTED BY DIASEC PHOTO, 50X81 CM

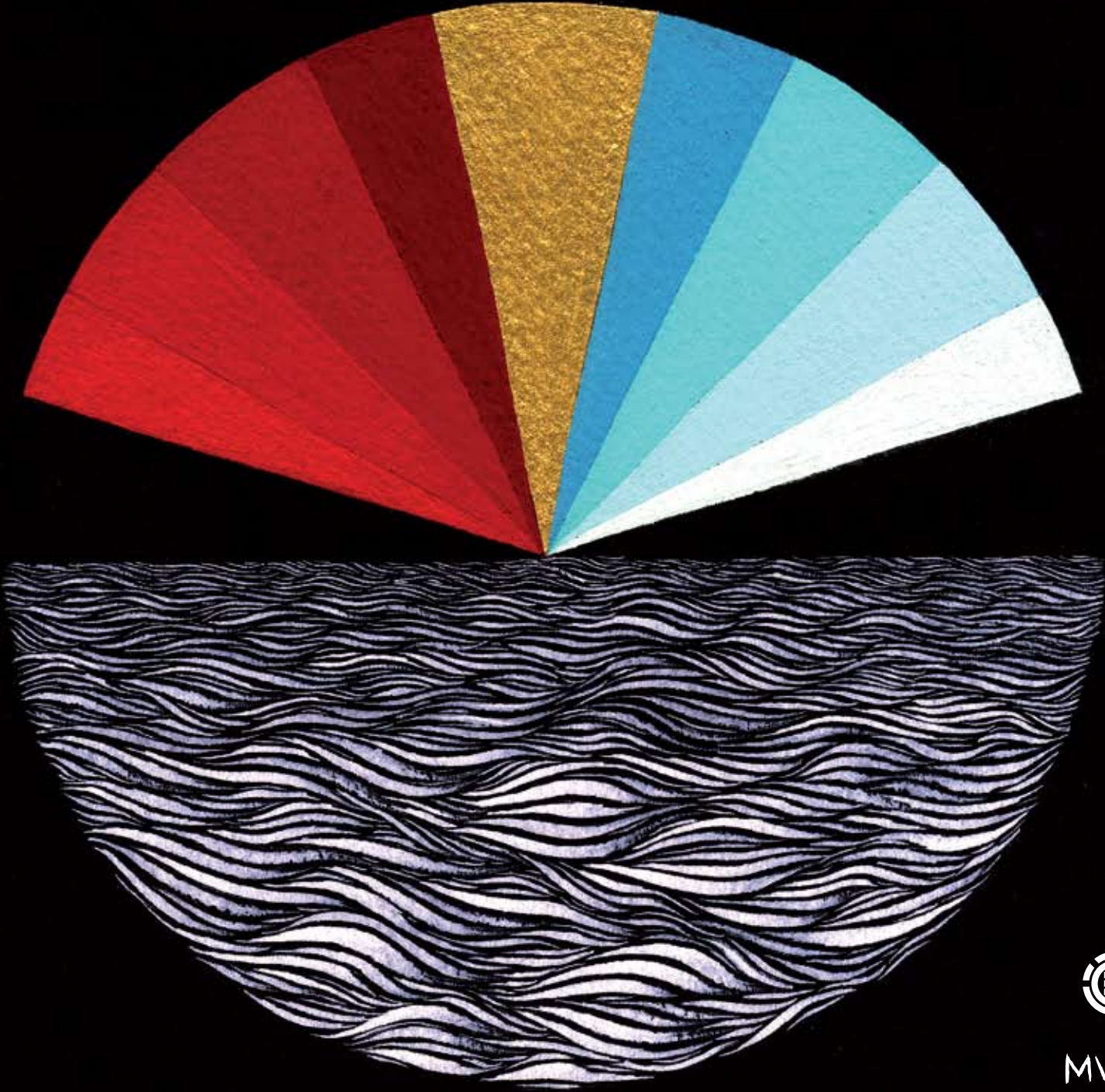
WINNERS TAKES NOTHING
FROM THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY SERIE, CIGARETTE BUTTS INSTALLATION IN “LA DEFENSE” (BUSINESS DISTRICT, PARIS, INSTALLATIONS DOCUMENTED BY DIASEC PHOTO, 50X81 CM

SIMPLY THE BEST
FROM THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY SERIE, CIGARETTE BUTTS INSTALLATION WITH USED CONDOMS IN “BOIS DE BOULOGNE PROSTITUTION DISTRICT IN PARIS” INSTALLATIONS DOCUMENTED BY DIASEC PHOTO, 50X81 CM

YOUR POTENTIAL, OUR PASSION
FROM THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY SERIE, CIGARETTE BUTTS INSTALLATION IN FRENCH CAFÉ, DOCUMENTED BY DIASEC PHOTO, 50X81 CM



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