

**Q + A**

**AU-DELÀ DE L'IMAGE, 2016**

*This short Q and A occurred as part of the exhibition Au-delà de l'image, at Galerie Escougnou-Cetraro in Paris, France.*

**As you know, this exhibition explores the role of the images within contemporary practices. You are a sculptor but, as says Emmanuelle Chiappone-Piriou in the text introducing your work, often your devices return the sculpture to a kind of flatness. Why do you generate an ambiguity between the volume and the image? Is it to make the sculpture more quickly sizable by the spectator? Or is it a way to move the sculptural material towards the world of the Platonic ideas?**

These ideas definitely resonate for me. I suppose the way it often materializes in my work is through the use of archetypal forms – shapes and imagery that help mold our collective reality. In some very sculptural way, the work also communes with a long history of flattening three-dimensional forms until they can be described as an icon, or an image - this is an ancient communicative tool. Stepping off this idea, in our present here-and-now, we're witness to a reality that has inverted itself, one where all objects arrive to us first in image-form. In this way, an image now must be perceived as an object's native state - its primary form. This reversal requires some mental rewiring on our part, but sparks a set of new possibilities and nutritious problems. My work is invested in these problems, so even as it might converse with ancient art making vocabularies, it also tries to understand something about our shared, lived-through experience in the glow of screens – a world of levitating icons, shadowless objects hovering in luminescent white fields...

**We have the impression that you make objects which have iconic and archetypal forms, and give them a status of metaphoric images, within a universal narrative. The sculpture as the image, the image as the metaphor? Could you speak about the employment of the metaphor within your works?**

Very early on, I was studying the concept, and devices of narration, to which metaphor has some connection to. I suppose in a very elliptical way, I was trying to understand why sculpture struggles to say simple things – to address its audience directly, to relay a narrative. During these studies, I realized many things. One, that the communicative properties of sculpture and the methods in which time is encoded within it, are vastly different than our shared, more popular forms: books, theater, film and songs. What I realized was that something very strange and beautiful began to happen when I simply allowed for, and later encouraged the natural ways our minds crave meaning – the way they assemble stray events, disparate forms into things we agree to be meaningful. Yet to do this, the narrative arcs and metaphors I needed access to were not literary, but sculptural, and this required a completely different methodology to coax meaning into a form.

**The work which you show in the frame of the exhibition Au-delà de l'image, is also a work which proposes several degrees of reading. While approaching the image, it appears like a collage with all its details. From this second reading, it emanates a kind of energy, a tension from a coexistence of multiple ill-assorted objects on the same solar panel. The title of the work, five hundred seconds, refers to the time that the solar energy is deployed and arrives at the earth, feeding all which surrounds us, from fruits to computers. This energy establishes the common denominator of all the elements which exist on earth. These elements are mixed in your work without any form of hierarchy: the animal, the vegetable, the synthetic material, the digital technology, the human and the not-human. The list could be very long.**

**Could you speak to us about this coexistence between elements belonging to a different domain? Is your approach situated in the lineage of speculative realism?**

Yes, in some ways, but more broadly Speculative Realism exists under a larger rubric of Materialism, which for me, feels more generative. I think as Speculative Realist thought atomizes into more and more refined strains of research and thinking we are seeing some very strange, playful and in the long-term, very vital assemblages of

information that draw on Materialist philosophies as a motivating ethos. For me, the spirit that drives my approach, of course, is one that is non-hierarchical, but one that also tries to understand and consider the very real capacities and intensities that differentiate objects. "Non-hierarchical" doesn't imply everything should be considered the same – this would be a huge mistake. Uranium is definitely not BPA plastic. I'm interested in a sculptural practice that accounts for extreme differences – where difference is vital, honored and importantly - helps to generate unknowns. Where beautifully bizarre, uniquely human solidarity fields can thrive.

**When we spoke about the metaphors and Platonic ideas, it's because certain works give the impression of temporal and spatial suspension, as well as a dreamlike dimension. From this, we realize mental images. The mental images are an emanation of our unconscious and our memory, thus by definition they depend on the human perception. What is your look about the human position within the world that you represent?**

I think this is an increasingly difficult question to answer accurately. Of course, when we pan out, humans are only one animal-creature amongst thousands and thousands of animal-creatures. And our minuscule-ness only increases as we include plant life, or microbes or speculative objects of diverging and mysterious sentience, or techno-sentience we can't yet fathom as with AI, or even imagine, as with exo-planetary intelligences. But I say this, and our lived day-in-day-out experience is one of intense humanistic-myopia. Of course, our success evolutionarily is intricately bound to a continual adaptation of this inbred myopic tendency. So much so that now, if we are to enter a third act of humans on earth, we must work against the very forces that have made us successful in the past. This kind of cognitive dissonance we see on display minute by minute in any thinking, reasoning person's reality. For me, the human is the stubborn lens through which I can see and process, so it invariably structures the basis of all my questions.