

Lauragais, February 2020

“Works of art are of an infinite loneliness and nothing can reach them so little as criticism. Only love can grasp them and keep hold of them and be just to them.”
Rainer Maria Rilke

For Paul Klee, *“plants represent an urge for life that art makes palpable, visible.”* This is also often the aim of contemporary artists who, in order to better represent nature by imitating its systems, extrapolate them and bring them back into the realm of art. But this genre delights more in imitating than in showing.

Monique Deyres has chosen a completely different path. She takes hold of nature, fresh from the harvest, and declines it in a singular alphabet whose letters she alone knows. Through a subtle alchemy—crushing, maceration, decoction, liquefaction—narcissus, hyacinths, anemones, dahlias, roses, carnations, junipers, acanthus, and many others provide the juices and inks that create her palette. She treats them in a major key, offering them the rarest display media, such as the Arches paper that will receive her many "flower juices" to make colored prints, double-sided watercolors, a large installation of rolled sheets, all reminiscent of stained glass.

Elsewhere, in her studio, Monique Deyres takes hold of the modest fruits of our gardens, such as red or green apples, which for her become the virtuoso elements of nature. First, she elevates them via the brilliance of their appearance, and then she refuses to abandon them to becoming mere cores via a sacred baptism in Bordeaux mixture or lacquer. The core becomes a work of art. In other places, the artist marks out a plant-based path on the ground, with bricks made of flowers and compressed leaves—the vestiges of a reconfigured garden. Here and there are installed huts made of silken veils that iridesce with herbaceous colors, crushed plants, ash, earth, and pollen.

In the Chapelle du Carmel, Monique Deyres has chosen to harness space. Horizontality and verticality punctuate the site to better claim its sacredness. Chevets, aisles, and narthexes are dressed in the artist's creations. A way for her to immerse her work in the history of a place. But also in the cycle of life that she does not foresee as inevitable once art takes hold of it: through the marks left on its body, an unfortunately fallen and chopped up cedar reveals the multiple stages of its arboreal life. The artist then takes it, places a sheet of paper tinted with colors extracted from

coreopsis petals, then draws from her other magical jars to make a mark that becomes décor (aisle), the evanescent signs of a learned, skillful creation. It is the artist's imagination that leads her *"to form images that go beyond reality, that sing about reality"*. (1) Each mark is in its own way a walk of life.

The artists of antiquity diluted colors in melted wax, which they then applied to canvas; in his Natural History, Pliny the Elder describes how this was done in the portraits of the Fayum. Monique Deyres uses the same techniques, but uses more ingredients from the garden—wood, plants, earth, ash, beeswax—which she inscribes, embeds, or prints in panels, worked repeatedly in multiple layers to create a rendering via whose inlay we can imagine without feeling its roughness.

Wall ornaments for an ancient city or a friary chapel.

The artist becomes a seamstress to craft her Grand Curtain. She shreds the papers she has stamped with cedar watercolor, reassembles them in a stitched-back-together fashion and, in a fit of inspired randomness, mounts the leaves of her hanging. Obstinate work whose fragility is reminiscent of the partitions of Japanese houses. Monique Deyres creates an immaterial architecture, a frame for the imaginary...

A work—the cartography of a thought in motion—that rejects the initial and undoubtedly works to produce and reproduce an act of beauty infinitely and at the immediate discretion of inspiration. *"Time has only one reality: that of the moment"*. (1) Hence this need to feign with the ephemeral.

Contemporary art is enriched today by its relationship to nature. We recall the 7,000 oaks planted by Beuys at Documenta de Kassel in 1982, and the sculpted trunk of Guiseppe Penone presented this year in Paris, but it is the tree that often conveys the collective imagination. Land Art uses the floral medium as a geographical reference or an immersive installation, even a mock landscape. No algorithm, no technological artefact governs the creative universe of Monique Deyres. She walks through her garden, and her only tools from then on are a pruning knife and pruning shears. It is in the secrecy of the workshop, which becomes an alchemist's lab, that an original, unique, demanding oeuvre is developed.

Something to be enjoyed!

Philippe Bidaine

Honorary Director of Editions du Centre Pompidou,
Art Historian, "L'Art Contemporain", Scala Editions.

(1) Gaston Bachelard: "Water and Dreams", "Intuition of the moment"

Traduction: David CLARK