

COMFORT



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& MORE

VOLUME 2



The Residents 2021
Installation view

Orford Ness, Suffolk, England

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Tatiana Trouvé

THE RESIDENTS

in conversation with
CARLA ACEVEDO YATES

Photo: © Francesco Russo.
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Carla Aceveedo Yates

Let's start at the beginning. How did this project come to your attention? Can you talk about your process, the research and thinking that led to *The Residents*?

Tatiana Trouvé

This project was born in a very particular way, because I could discover the place only at the time of the installation. This situation, linked to the health crisis, was very singular and new for me. Generally, my ideas or intuitions find their source in a relationship with the place. My first visit to Orford Ness was the day I was installing my work. I began to work with photographic and film documents and stories that James Lingwood brought back to me as we talked and developed the project. It was also a path strewn with constraints, because this place, under the guardianship of the National Trust, is both a nature reserve and an archaeological site frequented by scientists. In short, in this landscape which seems to come straight out of a Tarkovski film, one cannot move the slightest stone, the slightest piece of rusty iron, not even drive a nail or walk outside the marked paths in order to preserve the delicate ecosystem which has developed there since the departure of man. A whole fragile and abundant plant, animal and bacterial life, in the middle of this mineral and maritime environment, has taken its rights. This was the starting point of my project.

CAY

Did you choose the Lab for your installation? What is it about that particular space at Orford Ness that was of interest to you?

TT

I chose this space for all that it has lost and gained over time. Lab 1 was intended for testing with a large 3 meter deep tank that runs laterally through the entire space, much

like a small pool with two lines. Over time, the roof collapsed, insulation materials such as cork fell into the tank. Over the years, rainwater filled the pool to the brim, partially flooding the ground. The vegetation has settled on the cork sheets and floats according to the seasons, creating like reinvented archipelagos. On this artificial/natural pond tiny creatures live in the water. The organization of this universe gave rise to a most disconcerting reality, where several worlds intertwine and coexist, actually quite close to my drawings. I was literally captured.

CAY

Can you talk about some of the sculptural elements that you created in the space? For example, the gate that visitors first encounter?

TT

For the reasons I just mentioned, but also for practical reasons associated with public safety, Lab 1, where I was working, could not be accessed. A guardrail was needed. It would have been imposed if I had not proposed it myself. This element was particularly important, since it was the first thing you would see when approaching. So I thought of the Stickcharts, that wonderful navigation system from the Marshall Islands made from wooden sticks and shells. It found its place in this environment, in an echo between the Marshall Islands and Orford Ness Island, all of which were subject to military secrecy and bomb testing and experimentation, to evils whose consequences are not yet known. But this system also produced a navigational map for the installation, a point of departure given to the visitor that directed a movement of his gaze and a shift of his imagination. The shells indicated the position of the works in the space and the bamboo rods the different possible routes. The territory of Lab 1 became as if mapped by







my installation.

CAY

Orford Ness is an enigmatic place, inhabited by odd concrete structures and discarded materials abound. It seems like the ideal place for an aspect of your work that you have described as “a fossilized narrative.” How has place informed the development of this installation? What does the mystery surround the site, and what potentially occurred there, bring to the work?

TT

I think that a breath has, little by little, subtly reshaped this place: the wind has sculpted the dunes, eroded the concrete of the bunkers and the rain has created water reserves inside laboratories whose ceilings have been washed away. The site has become a work of inverted land art, since this proposal is not associated with the gesture of a man in the landscape, but with the work of the elements on a landscape that bears the trace of the gestures of men and the tragic events that took place there. My installation evokes this departure of men, but also projects the life of a past community of which we know little, since it seems at the same time archaic and contemporary, in dialogue with the nature which surrounds it and which grows through the sculptures, pierced aluminum covers bearing the patterns of marine cells or diagrams of drops of water.

CAY

Many of the sculptural elements in *The Residents* reference previous works of yours, such as the shoe or the blankets. I have always been interested in the archival aspect of your work – how your sculptures become themselves a type of archive of your own practice. Can you talk about your interest and engagement with the archive in relation to your work, as an accumulation of your life



and artistic practice, but also of time and memory?

TT

There are certain objects that I use very often in my installations and sculptures, cushions, blankets, mattresses, shoes, cardboard boxes, radios... These are generic objects of ordinary life, simple and that testify to a modest way of inhabiting places. I don't believe that their circulation in my work refers to a desire for an archive, but to the presence and the indices of these modest lives. Then, that these clues circulate from one place to another within my work, that is, that they have also come to inhabit my sculptures, installations and drawings, is true. And perhaps they have become the inhabitants of my works.

CAY

In your project in upstate New York, Between sky and earth, the unexpected encounter with your sculptures seems important to their interpretation and continued existence as an evolving narrative. The Residents, however, denies complete physical access to the viewer. You can't really get close to the works and there is a privileged point of view. What does this physical distance afford to public sculpture and, considering the history of the site, who is your ideal viewer? What are you hoping viewers take away from the work?

TT

At Orford Ness, the distance from the viewer was a given imposed by the place that I made my own, by integrating it into my proposal. This distance allowed me to develop a vision close to the drawing with the installation. But I do not conceive of an ideal spectator. And I don't think about developing a point of view either. I try to leave things open to a form of disorientation and a

possibility of navigation. I am more sensitive to the physical and mental floating that the works can produce, even for the drawings, than to a position from which one should see or understand them in a certain way. It is by changing our points of reference that we can discover or rediscover things differently.

CAY

Still, some viewers might not discern or identify some of your sculptures as artworks, but instead elements that are part of the environment of the site. It seems they are meant to be apprehended as if they have always been there, traces of human activity. Can you speak to that potential experience?

TT

I don't think there is any ambiguity. You can see that the hanging jacket is made of stone, that the radio is made of bronze and that the books are made of stone. Everything is transformed materially and plastically. Even if the *modus operandi* of these sculptures plays on subtle differences that can confuse the visitor's perceptions, there is no possible mistake about the nature of what we see. But it seems to me that the fact of apprehending my sculptures, not as artifacts, but as remains of human activity, says something else. It is that the environment as a whole has been transformed and that the transformations that my interventions bring about are integrated into it and participate in this coherence.





CAY

Nature seems to be an important, and rather uncontrollable, material in The Residents. How do you imagine the materiality of the work evolving over time?

TT

As it ages, concrete crumbles, moss and stains cover it, but it also carries new life: organisms live in it, come to inhabit it, it enters new cycles. But at Orford Ness these cycles seem to accelerate, because the alterations of the elements are more violent. It is an anti-white cube, the nightmare of every conservative. I think that this intensity guides the way we look at things when we are in these places and we project the altered states of what we see there all the more. However, these works were only temporarily exhibited there and will only have known these conditions for the time of an encounter.



On June 8th 2022 Tatiana will be opening two new shows in Paris:

1. An immersive installation at Centre Pompidou.
2. A feature of complimentary works to run adjacent to the installation at Centre Pompidou at Gagosian's newest Parisian gallery at rue de Castiglione.





