

HICHAM BERRADA PAYSAGES A CIRCADIENS

27 March - 13 May 2015

I start from the premise that everything exists in nature and that we are within it.
Hicham Berrada

For his first exhibition at the galerie kamel mennour, Hicham Berrada transforms the space into a sensorial landscape. The temperature, the light and dark, the blue sky and the night, the images and scents of flowers all appear and steal away, fade and spread, immersing the visitor in a unique experience. This scripted environment at the crossing of science and poetry, of intuition and knowledge, is based on an inverted temporal mechanism: the artist upsets the climatic conditions and the circadian rhythm¹ of plants to create three landscapes, *Azur*, *C eleste* and *Mesk-ellil*².

Hicham Berrada stages chemically activated changes and metamorphoses in his work; in so doing, he invites the visitor to experience the unique energies and forces emanating from the matter he utilizes. At the Villa Medici (September 2013-August 2014), he extended his research by creating enclosed worlds from elemental matter and bits of landscape from ore. We can see the results of this work in *Azur*, a suite of canvases bathed in cobalt that explores changes in the ore's state. Overwhelmed by heat, the cobalt transforms into a vibrant material - in this extraordinary moment of pictorial metamorphosis from one state of matter to another, a big, pure sky gradually rises to the surface of the canvas. Whether this aerial landscape stabilizes or takes flight depends on the temperature: when warm, the blue spreads, and when cold, it dissolves somewhat. From the blue to the light, this partition in two - which differs from painting to painting - evokes the sun's path towards the horizon. The cerulean reverie unites the ore and the light, the earth and the sky, and the terrestrial ore becomes a sort of inverted star, "a light from the earth". Yet this connection is not symbolic - it is a testament to the richness of this world buried secretly in the earth, and to this "energetic work of hard substances"³ that, as Gaston Bachelard says, comes to life in "promised beauties"³. The artist continues to focus on this mysterious unity of matter and the heavens in the video *C eleste*. A thick blue smoke constituted of refined ore takes flight, moves about, and melts into a gray sky. Light is given body, the sky is colored. A fragment of blue sky gradually appears. In the thick of this aerial landscape filled with minerals, Hicham Berrada offers us "the calm to imagine" a new blue.

Faced with these two landscapes, Hicham Berrada invites us below, to a reverie of essences. In a blue light, he devises a chiaroscuro garden where nature presents itself to us in the darkness and secretly releases its subtle scents. This botanical theater in which nature and artifice mingle takes the form of a glass pavilion with alleys of *mesk-ellil* (night musk). This delicate flower, this five-petal star, displays its white beauty in the day. At night, in the blue of the evening, it opens, straightens up, and emits its ester. Sensual and sweet, zesty and enchanting, its scent speaks to us all night long. The work thus invites visitors to take the path from which the perfume emanates. The artist lyrically manipulates the climatic parameters and the circadian rhythm to create this environment: in the day, an artificial darkness falls on the little biosphere; in the evening, horticultural lighting provides the plants with the necessary illumination. A veritable dream factory, this transfiguration of day into night, the inverted life of these flowers, and the profusion of perfumes awaken the senses and emotions as they transport visitors from the gallery space to somewhere beyond.

Poetic and illusory, this small parcel of a world constitutes a closed ecosystem together with *Azur*. Indeed, each contributes to constitute the other. The humidity emanating from the plants below acts on the environment of *Azur* and the heat from the paintings above affects the garden in turn. This exhibition divided into successive, cross-fertilizing scenes invites visitors to take a poetic voyage in time and space, to a world both alive and inert, to unknown regions where nature, matter, and creation meet.

  Mouna Mekouar

Hicham Berrada's exhibition is on view Tuesday through Saturday, from 11am to 7pm, at 6 rue du Pont de Lodi - 75006 Paris.

Aside from his show at the gallery, Berrada will have a solo show « Sol » on view at the gallery Micro Onde, in V elizy-Villacoublay (France), from April 11th to June 27th, 2015. Opening Friday, 10th of April, 19h

For more information, please contact Emma-Charlotte Gobry-Laurencin, Marie-Sophie Eich , Jessy Mansuy-Leydier, Claudia Milic, or Dylan Lessel, by phone: +33 1 56 24 03 63 or by e-mail: galerie@kamelmennour.com

¹ The circadian rhythm is the set of biological events that occur every 24 hours in living organisms.

² The vernacular for *Cestrum nocturnum* in the Maghreb.

³ Gaston Bachelard, *La terre et les r veries de la volont * [*Earth and Reveries of Will*], Paris, Librairie Jos  Corti, [1948] 2004, p. 13.

Born in 1986 in Casablanca, Morocco, Hicham Berrada lives and works in Paris. He currently has a solo show at the Centre d'art de l'Onde in V elizy-Villacoublay, France. Berrada has participated in many group shows at institutions including the MAC/VAL in France, the Fondation Vasarely, the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, the Fresnoy, Studio National des Arts Contemporain, the CCC in Tours, and P51 in New York. His work has also been shown in performances at the Maxxi in Rome, the Abbatoirs in Toulouse, and on the occasion of the Nuit Blanche in Paris and Melbourne, as well as at the MAC/VAL in France.