



FONDATION
D'ENTREPRISE
HERMÈS

Exhibition

“Musa Nuit”

Minia Biabiany

From June 27 to September 5, 2020

La Verrière, Brussels

Curator: Guillaume Désanges

Series “Matters of Concern | Matières à penser”

PRESS KIT

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Minia Biabiany

“Musa Nuit”

For the fourth segment of the series “Matters of Concern | Matières à penser”, launched in April 2019 at La Verrière, the Brussels art space of the Fondation d’entreprise Hermès, curator Guillaume Désanges presents a solo exhibition by the Guadeloupean artist Minia Biabiany.

“Since the early 2010s, Minia Biabiany has developed a corpus of great subtlety, in sculpture, graphic work and film, characterised by its economy of form and its proliferation in space. Her eclectic palette of materials (cotton, wood, plastic, metal rods, bamboo, banana leaves, salt, chalk, and more) is orchestrated with crystalline precision, like a series of clues set down in response to a guiding narrative that is otherwise unseen. And yet this ethereal work – suggestive rather than directive, with a discreet elegance that transcends its (literally) raw materials – may be seen as ‘loaded’, too. It is haunted by issues of identity connected to the history of Guadeloupe and the Caribbean as a whole (the artist’s home region, where she continues to work and reflect). Here, the weight of this geopolitical legacy, marked by French cultural assimilation, colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade, is conveyed in the sounds, materials, words and infinitesimal gestures that constitute her practice. The magnetism of her work, more sensual than discursive, more poetic than overtly political, resides in a ‘memory of things’ comparable to the memory of water: an indelible yet transparent mark, an afterglow that shines through the surface of objects and may be reactivated in the service of creative catharsis.”

From the text by Guillaume Désanges (for the full text, see below).

Concurrent with the exhibition “Musa Nuit” at La Verrière, Minia Biabiany presents “J’ai tué le papillon dans mon oreille” at MAGASIN des Horizons, Grenoble (France) until June 7, 2020.

La Verrière
Boulevard de Waterloo 50 – 1000 Brussels

Exhibition from June 27 to September 5, 2020
Preview on Friday, June 26, 2020
From 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Exhibition open Tuesday to Saturday,
noon to 6 p.m.
Admission free
Guided visits every Saturday at 3 p.m.

Cover: Minia Biabiany, *Toli Toli*,
colour video, 10 min, Guadeloupe, 2018.
Courtesy of the artist © Minia Biabiany

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Since the early 2010s, Minia Biabiany has developed a corpus of great subtlety, in sculpture, graphic work and film, characterised by its economy of form and its proliferation in space. Her eclectic palette of materials (cotton, wood, plastic, metal rods, bamboo, banana leaves, salt, chalk, and more) is orchestrated with crystalline precision, like a series of clues set down in response to a guiding narrative that is otherwise unseen. And yet this ethereal work – suggestive rather than directive, with a discreet elegance that transcends its (literally) raw materials – may be seen as “loaded”, too. It is haunted by issues of identity connected to the history of Guadeloupe and the Caribbean as a whole (the artist’s home region, where she continues to work and reflect). Here, the weight of this geopolitical legacy, marked by French cultural assimilation, colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade, is conveyed in the sounds, materials, words and infinitesimal gestures that constitute her practice. The magnetism of her work, more sensual than discursive, more poetic than overtly political, resides in a “memory of things” comparable to the memory of water: an indelible yet transparent mark, an afterglow that shines through the surface of objects and may be reactivated in the service of creative catharsis.

This close attention to raw materials, this faith in their restorative power, prompted our invitation to Minia Biabiany to participate in the exhibition series “Matters of Concern | Matières à panser” at La Verrière. Beginning in 2019, the series develops a curatorial ecology that gathers and presents practices that revisit the function and production of art through a renewed focus on its basic materials, invested with spiritual, symbolic, social, therapeutic or magical purpose. All of this is present in Biabiany’s art: nature is harnessed for the representation of culture, forgotten skills are revived to depict the present, ghosts are invoked to inform the real world, and all in a dynamic continuum of the mineral and vegetable, things and people.



Still from Minia Biabiany’s video, *flè a poyo, restauring the body*, 2015, 5.50 min.
Courtesy of the artist © Minia Biabiany

Responding to the spirit of the series, Biabiany addresses the sexuality of Guadeloupean and Caribbean women today, and the subconscious imprint of history. Her approach is not illustrative or theoretical, but sensual and metaphorical, proceeding in concentric circles. Woven nets, sensual sculptures that explore the terrain of the “body-as-archipelago”, basketwork plinths, the image of an unfurling banana flower (a *musa*), are just some of the elements included in this sensory laboratory, conceived as an abstract and physical tool for the reactivation of memories long buried. A poetic, therapeutic practice whose audacity resides in its articulation of vernacular signs, precisely in order to fight cultural exoticism and determinism.

Biabiany’s inspiration is anchored in her vernacular culture, but the resulting forms have a far wider reach, embracing identity and gender, standardisation, stereotyping, political structures and the nature/culture dichotomy. Her use of traditional weaving and basketwork techniques enacts a wider practice focused on the interweaving of signs, narratives and media to create a form of total art – hybrid, organic, constantly evolving. An aesthetic mix (drawing, craftwork, video) based on a kind of animism revisited. In the Western Middle Ages, witches – identified, with hindsight, as proto-feminist figures – were women who knew the medicinal properties of plants, mastered the

learning of their day and emancipated themselves from the patriarchy through economic, technical and scientific self-determination. The same emancipatory logic applies to the “polytechnical” culture of Biabiany’s art: references to magic abound in her forms and writing (a kind of incantatory poetry). Her work is commemorative yet contemporary, eschewing nostalgia and outdatedness through its use of modern tools and materials.

Biabiany’s multisensory, immersive installations address the artist’s own fascination with the connection between conscious and subconscious identity, and solicit the physical presence of the viewer as witness and actor in the making of the work. Often, the viewer’s path through the work is confined and directive, playing on a sequence of spatial discoveries, the inaccessibility of objects and shifts of perspective.

Beyond the acknowledgment of the observer’s place within the exhibition (a response to a particular modernist critique – that of Michael Fried¹), this mobility of looking is a direct echo of the concept of memory. There is an ancient, primordial connection between movement and knowledge; between our human consciousness and the displacement of the body through space, from the Peripatetic school, for whom the practice of philosophy was enacted through walking, to the therapeutic method known as Family Constellations, a direct influence on Biabiany’s work.² Minia Biabiany conceives of the exhibition as a ritual form, establishing a relationship of empathy that engages the viewer, whose itinerary functions rather like the curious “art of memory” taught from antiquity onwards, and described by Frances Yates in her work of the same name. The technique involves the construction of an imaginary palace in which memories are stowed like objects, each in its place, to be recovered simply by retracing the mental route to their location.

Post-colonialism has been a significant force in contemporary art and academia for more than a decade, driven first and foremost by a determination to give unprecedented visibility to events and outcomes marginalised by history, so that we may critically rethink and reconstruct the present. The aim is to articulate things left unspoken, shine new light on the blind spots of history, and reveal

long-submerged images with important consequences for specific political, social and psychological constructs in the contemporary world. In this context, Biabiany’s art confronts the necessity of commemoration – made sharper still by her own heritage – while based, paradoxically, on the preservation of a form of invisibility. In her work, objects are overlaid with narratives that form a patina of absence, hidden in the folds of her materials and words, spreading like clandestine rumours. Through her art, Biabiany invites us to reconsider colonialism as a historical fact, and the standard for a particular type of invisible relationship: a place in which to house the things handed down to us and which inhabit our bodies and emotional affects. The psychoanalytical definition of the subconscious is a product of the same phenomenon: external narratives that colonise our own, inner narrative and partly determine our behaviour and emotions. For Minia Biabiany, this awareness comes without fear or shock, as a conscious work of poetic and fictional reappropriation of the tangled web of our identity.



Minia Biabiany, *jou wouvé, the beginning II*, 2017, colour video, 3.21 min.
Courtesy of the artist © Minia Biabiany

¹ Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, 1980, University of California Press.

² Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*, 1966, Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Series

“Matters of Concern | Matières à panser”

Through the “Matters of Concern | Matières à panser” series, Guillaume Désanges marks a conscious return to the material in art, but invested with spiritual, symbolic, social, therapeutic and magical preoccupations as a critical alternative to the dematerialisation of the prevailing economy. By referencing “other” practices and ways of thinking at the heart of contemporary society, and outside it, the series offers an in-depth examination of the modes of mindfulness and curiosity that are subtly subverting the established categories of contemporary art.

“Matters of Concern | Matières à panser” is the third series of themed exhibitions at La Verrière, after “Gestures, and thought” (2013–2016) and “Ballistic Poetry” (2016–2019).



View of the exhibition “Matters of Concern | Matières à panser”,
La Verrière, Brussels, 2019.
© Isabelle Arthuis / Fondation d'entreprise Hermès

Biography



Portrait of Minia Biabiany.
Courtesy of the artist © Nicolas Colón

Minia Biabiany (b. 1988, Guadeloupe) lives and works in Saint-Claude (Guadeloupe) and Mexico City.

Minia Biabiany is a visual artist and independent researcher in education. Her sensitive videos and installations explore our relationship to place and narrative through a poetic approach to form expressed in connections between objects, plants, repurposed symbolic representations and physical movement. She is interested in weaving and basketwork as a model through which to rethink constructs of narration, language and colonialism, past and present. Minia Biabiany's research parallels her educational work in the Caribbean through *Doukou*, an experimental teaching and art platform that engages with the concepts of Caribbean authors through the body and feelings. She is a recipient of the Prix Sciences Po pour l'art contemporain.

Recent solo and group exhibitions (selection)

2020

"J'ai tué le papillon dans mon oreille", MAGASIN des Horizons, Grenoble (France)

2019

"Le jour des esprits est notre nuit", CRAC Alsace, Altkirch (France)

"Manglaria", Museo Tertulia, Cali (Colombia)

"Diaspora Art from the Creole City", Corcoran School of the Arts and Design, Washington DC (USA)

2018

"We Don't Need Another Hero", 10th Berlin Biennale, Berlin (Germany)

"The Share of Opulence; Doubled; Fractional", Sophie Tappeiner Gallery, Vienna (Austria)

"Dimension Caribe 27", Centro León, Santiago (Dominican Republic)

2016

"Spelling", Signal, Center for Contemporary Art, Malmö (Sweden)

"In the Belly of the Whale", Witte de With, Rotterdam (Holland)

2015

"(sex)intaxis", Cráter Invertido, Mexico City (Mexico)

Press images

Hi-def visuals are available for download at:

www.fondationentreprisehermes.org/en/press-room (password on request)

Views of the exhibition will be available after the preview



Portrait of Minia Biabiany.
Courtesy of the artist © Nicolas Colón



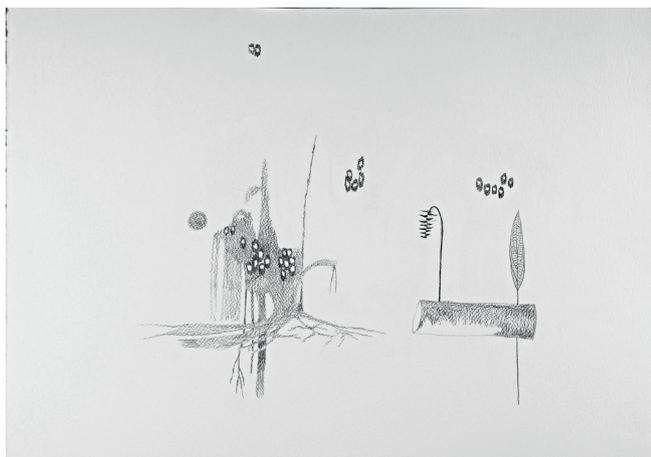
Installation *The unity is submarine* by Minia Biabiany,
exhibition "In the Belly of the Whale", 2016,
Witte de With, Rotterdam (Netherlands).
Courtesy of the artist © Minia Biabiany



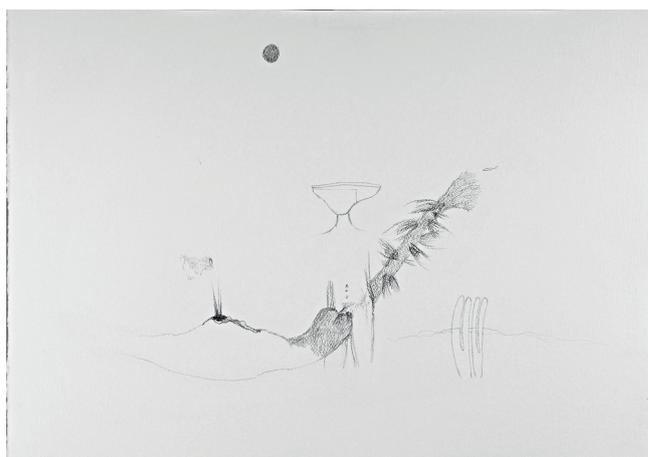
Installation *The unity is submarine* by Minia Biabiany,
exhibition "In the Belly of the Whale", 2016,
Witte de With, Rotterdam (Netherlands).
Courtesy of the artist © Minia Biabiany



Minia Biabiany, *Toli Toli*, 2018,
colour video, 10 min.
Courtesy of the artist © Minia Biabiany



Minia Biabiany, *Narrativas del aquí / 2, pausas sobre la no-Historia del Caribe*, 2018, pencil on paper, 50 x 65 cm. Collection of Centro León, Santiago de los Caballeros (Dominican Republic). Courtesy of the artist © Minia Biabiany



Minia Biabiany, *Narrativas del aquí / 2, pausas sobre la no-Historia del Caribe*, 2018, pencil on paper, 50 x 65 cm. Collection of Centro León, Santiago de los Caballeros (Dominican Republic). Courtesy of the artist © Minia Biabiany



Minia Biabiany, *Relation*, 2014, black-and-white analogue photograph, work document. Courtesy of the artist © Minia Biabiany



Minia Biabiany, *Qui vivra verra, qui mourra saura*, 2019, mixed media, CRAC Alsace. Courtesy of the artist © Aurélien Mole



Minia Biabiany, *Leyendo plantas*, 2015, mixed media.
Courtesy of the artist © Minia Biabiany



Minia Biabiany, *Leyendo plantas*, 2015, mixed media.
Courtesy of the artist © Minia Biabiany



Minia Biabiany, *Doubout'* (detail), 2017, cotton sculpture.
Courtesy of the artist © Minia Biabiany



Minia Biabiany, *Leyendo plantas*, 2015, inverted photograph printed on transparent paper.
Courtesy of the artist © Minia Biabiany



Minia Biabiany, detail of the installation *Murmuran que el cabello es la memoria*, 2017, black-and-white digital photograph.
Courtesy of the artist © Minia Biabiany



Minia Biabiany, *Sex sintaxis*, 2015,
mixed media.
Courtesy of the artist © Minia Biabiany



Minia Biabiany, *jou wouvé, the beginning II*, 2017,
colour video, 3.21 min.
Courtesy of the artist © Minia Biabiany



Still from Minia Biabiany's video, *Blue Spelling*,
a change of perspective is a change of temporality, 2017,
2.22 min.
Courtesy of the artist © Minia Biabiany



Stills from Minia Biabiany's video,
flè a poyo, restauring the body, 2015,
5.50 min.
Courtesy of the artist © Minia Biabiany



View of Minia Biabiany's installation
Toli Toli, 2018,
10th Berlin Biennale.
Courtesy of the artist © Tim Ohler



Minia Biabiany, *Toli Toli*, 2018,
colour photograph, work document.
Courtesy of the artist © Minia Biabiany



Minia Biabiany, *Toli Toli*, 2018,
work document.
Courtesy of the artist © Minia Biabiany



Minia Biabiany, *Lannuit z'è wouvè*, 2014,
colour analogue photograph.
Courtesy of the artist © Minia Biabiany

Guillaume Désanges

Guillaume Désanges is an art critic and exhibition curator. He is the director of the independent production company Work Method, and develops exhibition projects and conferences worldwide. Recent projects: “Amazing! Clever! Linguistic! An Adventure in Conceptual Art” (2013, Generali Foundation, Vienna, Austria), “A Universal Exhibition, documentary section” (2013, Louvain-la-Neuve Biennale, Belgium), “Curated Session #1: The Dora García files” (2014, Perez Art Museum, Miami, USA), “Ma’aminim, The Believers” (2015, Musée d’Art et d’Histoire, Saint-Denis & Tranzitdisplay, Prague, Czech Republic), “The Méthode Room” (2015, Chicago, USA), “Ballistic Poetry” (2016–2019, La Verrière, Brussels), “L’Esprit français. Contre-cultures 1969–1989” (2017, la maison rouge, Paris), “L’Ennemi de mon ennemi” (2018, Palais de Tokyo, Paris), “Spolia” (2018–2019, Grand Café, Saint-Nazaire), “Contre-Vents” (2019, Grand Café, Saint-Nazaire).



© Isabelle Arthuis

New from the Fondation d'entreprise Hermès

EXHIBITION PATRICK NEU

“Manège”

La Grande Place,
Musée du Cristal Saint-Louis,
Saint-Louis-lès-Bitche (France)
Until September 21, 2020

EXHIBITION SANDRA CINTO

“Cosmic Garden”

Le Forum, Tokyo (Japan)
Until May 31, 2020

EXHIBITION SOJUNG JUN

“Au Magasin de Nouveautés”
Atelier Hermès, Seoul (Korea)
May 8–July 5, 2020

IMMERSION #4

EXHIBITION GREGORY HALPERN

“Soleil cou coupé”

Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson,
Paris (France)

September 8–October 18, 2020

&

“Let the Sun Beheaded Be”

San Francisco of Modern Art
(USA)

Spring 2021

The Fondation d'entreprise Hermès supports individuals and organisations seeking to learn, perfect, transmit and celebrate the creative skills that shape our lives today and into the future.

The Foundation operates nine major programmes with a combined focus on skills, creativity and transmission: **New Settings** and **Artists in the Community** for the performing arts, **Exhibitions** and **Artists' Residencies** for the visual arts, **Immersion, a French-American Photography Commission** for photography, **Manufacto, the Skills Factory** and the **Skills Academy** for the discovery and perfection of artisan trades. **H³ – Heart, Head, Hand** is the Foundation's worldwide programme of support for organisations whose work reflects these central aims. The **Biodiversity & Ecosystems** programme enacts a core commitment to protect fragile ecosystems for future generations. Created in 2008, the Fondation d'entreprise Hermès is directed by Annick de Chaunac and presided by Olivier Fournier.

The Foundation's diverse activities are governed by a single, over-arching belief: *our gestures define us.*

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