

Michel Le Belhomme

LA BÊTE AVEUGLE (The Blind Beast)

Artist Book – 2009/2012

MICHEL LE BELHOMME’S LAWLESS SPACES

Everything happens close, very close to objects. Space there can only exist as obstructed, saturated. The square frame of the image reinforces this play on plenitude; the photographer fills his frames into “all-over” surfaces of light and shadow. He pushes all kinds of precarious installations into them.

In the latest practices, this sculptural tableau-generating protocol has created a history for itself from Brassai’s involuntary sculptures via Patrick Tosani’s full-scale ready-mades and rectified vantage points, or the anamorphic variances by the crafty collaborating couples Lorient and Mélior or Sue Webster and Tim Noble. From Brassai, Michel Belhomme has kept the use of mundane materials, their power of transformation. After Tosani he has been working on the singularities of objects, their metamorphoses in a play of proximity, perturbed by distance and the variation of scale. From the latter couples of artists he learnt the importance of a focal point where everything freezes and then rearranges itself.

Michel Le Belhomme studied under Tom Drahos at the École des Beaux Arts in Rennes. From him he learnt the technical consequences of the mastery and manipulation of the parameters of the photographic medium. Not without a particular sense of tragic humor though. Although he was exposed to Drahos’s mastery of color, he shied away from its sparkling flashiness. In Le Belhomme’s work, color has been dulled, evolving subtly within a range of beige and gray, sometimes warming up under some experimental fires. Subtle harmonies are generated by improbable tests, and develop in the sympathetic darkness of micro-laboratories. Yes, those are night colors, generated by visual observations less connected to dreams than to little nightmares for would-be claustrophobes. What emerges owes less to angst than to the enjoyment of a perversion of the inner codes ruling intimate spaces.

“Unfortunately, this space has remained lawless and it is dif-

ficult to describe what it engenders. It is discontinuous in the way some men have become outlaws,” which Georges Bataille evoked in *Le dictionnaire critique* (1970). The photographer sets out then to “fix” this in a very contemporary way.

Standing against the cold frontal monumentality initiated by the Dusseldorf School, the new school of the banal has anesthetized us with domestic boredom. Today, Le Belhomme’s work comes and avenges us from those kilometres of seconds spent looking for the exact death of an exalted mediocrity. Standing at the antipode of all this death by boring banality, each of Le Belhomme’s images proposes an adventure bearing the stamp of an exalted quotidian. Some are marked by the fatality of memory, others breathe the renewed energy of matter that takes its revenge over human constructions. Further others let seep out a smell of catastrophe on the scale of sub-continentals, the ruins of our dwellings. Every one of them reeks with the precious baroque generated by the entropy of interior architectures.

Creating singular images that feel as if they had learnt from Henri Michaux’s aphorisms, Michel Le Belhomme, through his viewfinder, rectifies sculptures born out of a high economy of means. Somewhat domestic, with a pinch of hand-work, the photographer develops a visual philosophy through masterpieces born out of precariousness.

Christian Gattinoni
Chief editor of lacritique.org
(Translate by Bruno Chalifour for Voies Off)



If Michel Le Belhomme’s photos disturb us in such a way, it is perhaps because they are inhabited by spectres sending us back to savagery and destitution. As long as man has existed, he has yearned for a roof over his head. The loss, disappearance, or collapse of shelter is, among all threats, a source for his worst nightmares. But these garbled constructions and saturated spaces are inhabited by yet other phantasms: the eruption of disorder in private space, that which encloses and isolates, that which alienates and drives you mad, a straitjacket and confinement of delirium.

A strong image speaks indirectly of what it’s describing and knows how to preserve a place for paradoxes, contrary and contradictory tensions: lack and overflow, loss and profusion, all the chaos that lives in a human being and pushes him to his very limits.

Christian Maccotta
Artistic director Boutographies



NO EXIT ZONES

Photography is a paradoxical means of expression. On the one hand, it is accessible to all and on the other it is an artistic practice. Indeed, the world is full of photographic images: from the simple family album to the world of advertising, including the press; our force-fed eye knows no respite, our sight is constantly carried away by the swell of images, our point of view drowns – it becomes tragically diluted in the visual whirlpools around us. And despite it all, there are still artists whose boldness adds to this magma by introducing new subjects, ideas and ways of seeing and representing. And suddenly, something happens: a photograph emerges from chaos, takes on a shape, swells with singular might – and embeds itself long-lastingly in the visual realm.

This experience – close to revelation – varies, in my opinion, from one individual to another. As for me, the work of Michel Le Belhomme led to this fascinating encounter. But how did it come about?

First of all, his pictures are definitely mysterious. If one lingers on them, they bring about more questions than they provide answers: what do we really see? A place, fine. But is it a real place our a reconstitution, or better yet the construction of a scale model – and on what scale? Is it a shot of a fragment of the world as we know it or a clever staging? How much preliminary elaboration is there? Where the heck are we? Then, there's this white light, ringing like a pale echo from one image to the next. This clarity helps us to distinguish what is shown and also acts against perception as it crushes the depth of field. There's something strangely blinding about it. And finally, there's the awkward feeling gaining on our sensors: a feeling of confinement. We're trapped... where's the exit? That's just it, we are in it, and there is no way out! Rooms without doors or windows, or whose exits have been voluntarily shut, such as the double window turned into a dark opaque chocolate bar that bizarrely echoes the “waffled” wall of the radiator just beneath it. And the mountain-view setting of a room apparently burned is but a trompe-l'oeil blocking our view; a makeshift cabin looks more like a barricaded watchtower than a feat of architecture by children builders; a «root-tree» bursts open the floor of a blind cell but its

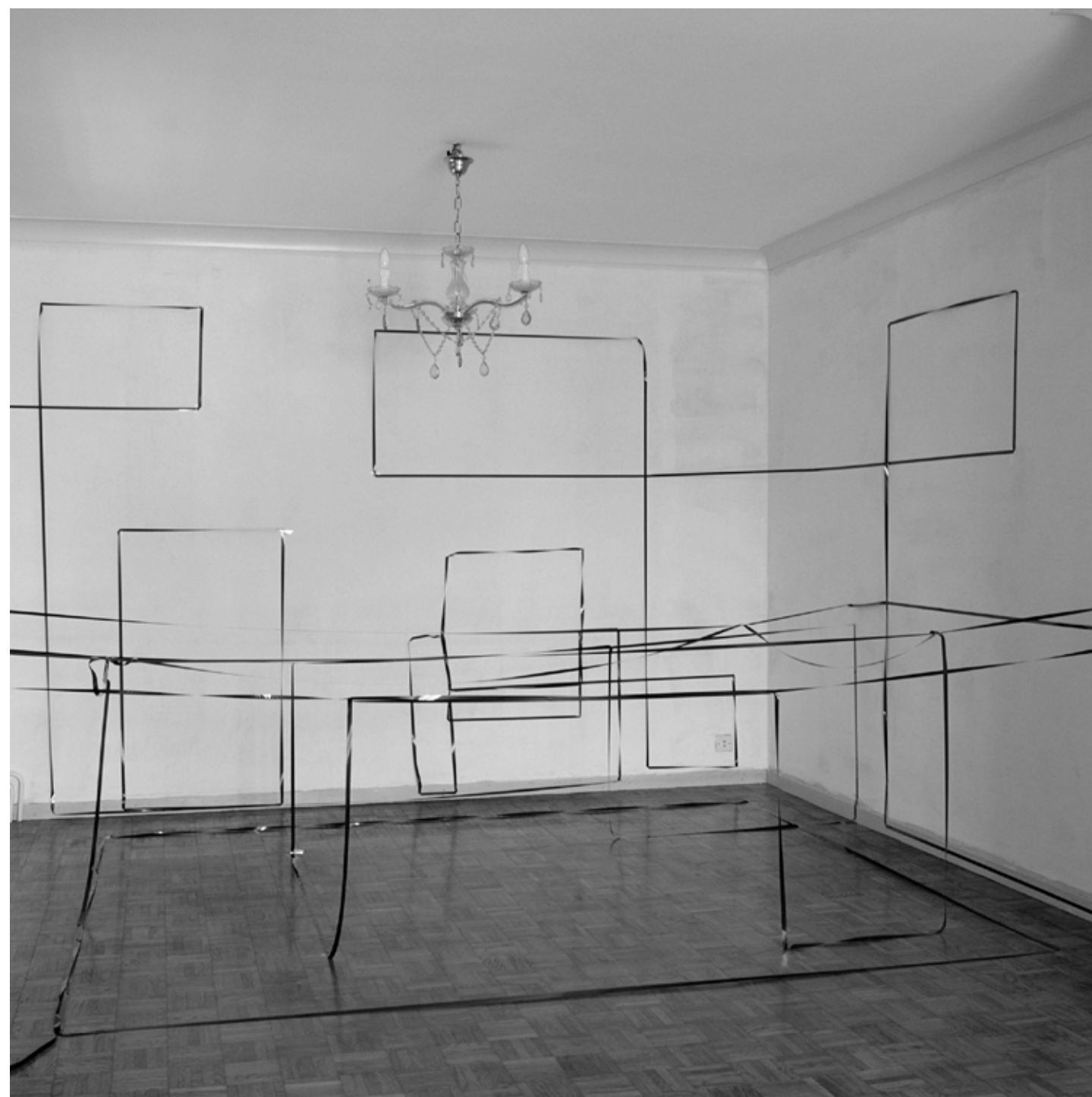
irruption only adds to the feeling of claustrophobia rather than favour an attempt to flee - it's actually an invasion!

Now that their fascinating form has captured us, what understanding can we draw from them?

First, we shall slide easily from a place represented to an imaginary place - I mean that these spaces that can, in theory, contain us, become spaces we contain. Those seemingly protective refuges, those precarious shelters, those homes diverted from their role of safety, are nothing more than rickety boxes in our troubled mind - they are mental boxes. Mental worries of the individual constantly torn between the desire to open himself to the world and explore it and the fear of being hurt or destroyed by its contact. Then, we notice great distress in the images of Michel Le Belhomme. We arrive on the scene after a catastrophe has taken place creating a certain traumatism. Everyday spaces have been vandalized by natural (the root tearing through the floor) or artificial forces (the obstruction of the window), or both (fire: accident or arson?). Where thus is one to find hope in this desolate universe? Fascination for these photographs is therefore a result of their strange form as well as their ambiguous discourse. Opposing forces create a dynamic tension that crosses these falsely static places: emptiness and fullness, loss and profusion, outer and private, dream and nightmare, order and chaos, freedom and confinement, etc. This work is indeed pertinent because of its power of suggestion - for nothing is said directly - which takes us from the personal anecdote to the existential anguish that is more universal: no one is safe from the swell that can carry us both towards reason and towards delirium. Beware of the inner storm!

Eric Van Essche,
ISELP director, associate professor at ULB
and Art History professor at La Cambre

























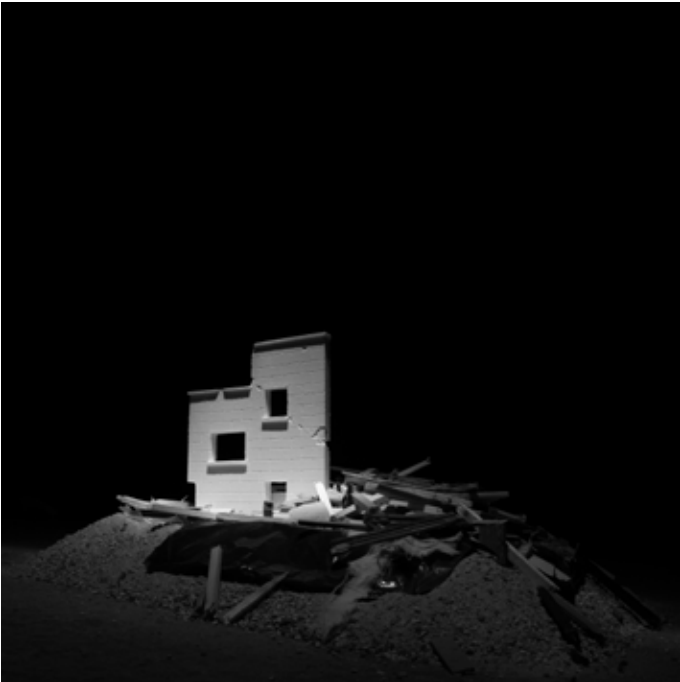
















Curriculum Vitae

GRANTS :

- 2012 - Mention spéciale International Awards of architectural photography, Galerie LaChambre, Strasbourg
- 2012 - Finaliste Prix QPN (Quinzaine Photographique Nantaise)
- 2011 - Mention spéciale du jury Bourse du Talent #48 – Architecture -espace, photographie.com
Jury : Pierre Henry Verlhac, Magali Jauffret, Cédric Delsaux, Christian Gattinoni, Basia Embiricos
- 2010 - Lauréat du premier “ PRIX LACRITIQUE.ORG – VOIS-OFF ”, Arles
Jury : Michel Poivert, Christian Gattinoni et Christophe Laloi
- 2010 - Lauréat concours MISSION JEUNES ARTISTES, Toulouse.
Jury : Régis Durand, Fabienne Fulchéri, Pascal Beausse
- 2010 - Lauréat concours SFR JEUNES TALENTS – PHOTOGRAPHIE.COM “ Raconter une histoire ”.
- 2000 - Aide a la création, DRAC BRETAGNE.

EXPOSITIONS (selection)

- 2012 - « The Flood Wall », Slide Shows, Galerie Basis, Amsterdam
- 2012 - « The Flood Wall », Slide Shows, Galerie Exposure Twelve, Berlin
- 2012 - « Presque Déjà Mort », exposition collective, Galerie LACOUR, LA COUR, Arles
- 2012 - « IMPOSTURES », 3ème Nuit de L’Instant », Slide Shows, carte Blanche Voies OFF, Marseille
- 2012 - « Ljósmyndadagar », Reykjavík Photo Festival, Slide Shows, Carte blanche Voies OFF, Reykjavík, Islande
- 2012 - « Bourse du talent 2011 », BNF François Mitterand, Paris.
- 2012 - « Biennale « Photographie et Architecture », # 4 , les espaces du quotidien», Bruxelles, Belgique.
- 2011 - « MANIFESTO », Festival d’images, Toulouse, France.
- 2011 - « LA BÊTE AVEUGLE », Galerie Voies-Off, Arles, France.
- 2011 - « Festival VOIES-OFF », Slide Shows de la série « La Bête Aveugle », Arles, France.
- 2011 - « 2ème Nuit de L’Instant », Slide Shows , Carte Blanche Voies OFF, Marseille
- 2011 - « BOUTOGRAPHIES », Montpellier, France
- 2011 - « DIORAMA », semaine critique Sainte- Beuve, carte blanche, interventions in situ polymorphe en différents lieux du port de la ville, en collaboration avec Aurélien Maillard / sculpteur, Emmanuel SORIN / architecte, Boulogne Sur Mer, France.
- 2010 - « Festival VOIES-OFF », Slide Shows de la série « La Bête Aveugle, Arles, France.
- 2004 - « Salon d’art contemporain », Montrouge, France.
- 2001 - « Jeune création », Espace Charlie Parker, Grande halle de la Villette, Paris.
- 2001 - « GÉO-PROCESS », CCBP (Centre de Création de Bazouges-la-Pérouse). Collectif Nieuw DATA
- 2000 -« Nieuw DATA », Exposition de travaux personnels des membres du collectif NIEUW DATA, ainsi que des travaux réalisés par ce collectif, Fougères.
- 2000 - « Scènes de genre, territoires fictionnels », Dans le cadre du « MOIS OFF» de la photographie, Pantin. Conférence off, images et attitude ; en compagnie de Jean RAULT, Dominique Gaessler, Georges Collins, Francis Combes.
- 2000 - « Présentations », étudiants du mastère 2001, école Régionale des Beaux-Arts, Rennes.
- 2000 - « Configuration », Rennes, galerie Le Coin. Exposition du Collectif Nieuw DATA
- 2000 - « Grand Chantier »,dans le cadre d’Electrohappening, scène ouverte aux expérimentations multimédia, Halle Martenot, Rennes. Exposition du Collectif Nieuw DATA
- 1999 - « Diplômés art 1999 », école Régionale des Beaux-Arts, Rennes.
- 1996/97 - « Figures d’écoles », exposition itinérante,Galerie le Lieu, Lorient ; Galerie du Triangle, Rennes ; Galerie L’Imagerie, Lannion ; Quimper.
- 1996 - « Mai de la photographie », Reims.

PUBLICATIONS :

- 2012 - Catalogue « Biennale Photographie et Architecture 4 », texte critique de Eric Van Essche, directeur de l’ISELP, chargé de cours à l’ULB et professeur d’histoire de l’art à La Cambre
- 2011 - L’Héliotrope #06 Mise en scènes, revue photographique
- 2011 - Catalaogue d’exposition « Manifesto »
- 2011 - KIBLIND magazine, pages Blanches
- 2011 - Catalaogue d’exposition « Boutographies », texte critique de Christian Maccotta
- 2010 - Photo Nouvelles n°65, accompagné d’un texte critique de Christian Gattinoni
- 2004 - Catalaogue de l’exposition « Salon d’art contemporain », Montrouge, France.
- 2000 - Catalaogue de l’exposition « Jeune création », Paris.
- 2000 - Cédérom « GÉO-PROCESS », CCBP éditions.
- 2000 - Catalogue « MOIS OFF» de la photographie, éd le temps des cerises.

Collection BNF, fond patrimonial photographique
Collections privés



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Exposition « LA BÊTE AVEUGLE »,
Galerie Voies-Off, Arles, France- 2011

