



February 2020 (architecture, snow) – Villa Kujoyama / Work in progress

**Pétrel I Roumagnac (duo)**

**Research-Creation: *de l'Ekumen, photoscenic piece n°3***

**VILLA KUJOYAMA 2020 – IN CONVERSATION WITH...**

#1

**CHARLOTTE FOUCHET-ISHII**

**Villa Kujoyama Director**

**Charlotte:** Welcome again to both of you! How is this beginning of residency going? This arrival at Villa Kujoyama, in Japan, in Kyoto?

**Vincent:** All great! The jetlag was not too brutal and the warm welcoming from the Villa team allowed us to land smoothly. Thanks!

**Aurélié:** Both of us have already come to Japan several times for solo projects.

**Vincent:** Yes. And we already know Kyoto, a little, so we are not in the emergency of a first time, we are rather in the pleasure, very smooth, to return to a place that we love, and which is already a little familiar.

**Aurélié:** We came often to Japan, but never together! This is new for us, and it's a great joy to finally be able to be here for a duo project.

**Charlotte:** Yet it seems to me that one of your first duo projects was already related to Japan. You made a work based on the rebuilding of Ise shrines, didn't you?

**Aurélié:** Yes, but only Vincent went that time on the construction site...

**Vincent:** When in 2013 Aurélié invited me for a carte blanche in her studio in Cité des Arts in Paris, I proposed to her, instead of presenting a piece of my solo, that we should continue our collaboration initiated only a year before.

**Aurélié:** You then made this invitation coincide with a trip to Japan that you had already planned for yourself. You made a detour for us through the forest of Ise, to see the reconstruction of the 120 shrines dedicated to Amaterasu, the supreme goddess of the Shinto pantheon.

**Vincent:** Yes, the dismantling and identical reconstruction of these shrines, with fresh hinoki wood every twenty years, on a plot located right next to where they were built before, seemed to me to be an interesting figure, or

pattern, in relation to the first gestures we were proposing as a pair...

**Aurélie:** Vincent took pictures on spot for a few days, and he sent one of them to me every day. To each of the emailed images, I replied to him from my studio in the form of a photograph as well.

**Vincent:** We did a ping-pong of images between the reconstruction sites of *Ise* and the Parisian residence of Aurélie.

**Aurélie:** These exchanged images became the corpus of our piece *Ise*, printed on foldable PVC modules.

**Vincent:** *Ise* inaugurated our series of 'installations with a protocol for reactivations'...

**Charlotte:** The piece that you are preparing here at the Villa Kujoyama is not an installation with a protocol for reactivations, but a *photoscenic piece*, right? Can you quickly remind me of the difference?

**Vincent:** From 2012 to 2016 we indeed generated these *installations with a protocol for reactivations*. Installations of photographic objects and mixed materials that were taking place, as we said back then "at Aurélie's", i.e. in visual art contexts of exhibitions such as art centers, galleries, studios ...

**Aurélie:** These installations consisted of random movements and untimely redistributions of the photographic objects that constituted them, intending to disturb the spatio-temporal conventions of visibility, as public exhibitions.

**Vincent:** We were working on the concepts of *latency*, *reserve*, *distortion*, *deferral*...

**Aurélie:** ... elaborating upon ambiguities in regards to the availability of the pieces, and their images, to be fully apprehended. Searching for floating experiences in relation to the temporality of appearance and gaze...



Altérations #2 – in the group show « Dispositifs », Comédie de Caen C.D.N., Théâtre d'Hérouville-Saint-Clair, 2015.

**Vincent:** Concretely these installations looked like stocks, or *storages*, collected in a raw way, usually in corners, peripheric areas and edges of the exhibition space, waiting for activation and reactivation, according to pre-established protocols...

**Aurélie:** *Reserves* that could be seen as "just-delivered", or "about-to-be-picked-up" artworks, before or after a show...

**Vincent:** ... that is why many visitors when we started to show our first works turned their heels, thinking that the exhibition was delayed, or even finished...

**Aurélie:** Finally, over the duration of an exhibition, Vincent would pass by to move and remove the objects, without announcing it. The gesture was not related to performance or spectacle, but more to be experienced as an apparent technical gesture specific to the context of an exhibition, this kind of gesture that is usually invisible, most of the time carried out "backstage", but then strangely revealed during the public opening hours ...

**Vincent:** ... we were also playing then with a tendency of our time to multiply images, especially on social networks, of *art handling*.

**Charlotte:** and so the photoscenic pieces?...

**Aurélie:** A number of parameters of our installations with protocol for reactivations can be found in the configuration of our photoscenic pieces, such as moving photographic objects, reserve and redistribution issues, ambiguities about site-specific spatio-temporal regimes of appearance...

**Vincent:** We continue with these pieces to play with this recurrent question - this is the DNA of the duo's research: *when does the (art)work take place?*...

**Aurélie:** ... but the modes of implementation are different...

**Vincent:** The evolution is due to the fact that we wanted to rebalance our practices within the duo.

**Aurélie:** Yes. As we told you before, the first installations were made "at home" for me, so we wanted to transpose our figures "at Vincent's", that is to say towards "more" theatre, to the "stage" ...

**Vincent:** ... while maintaining the work on the photographic of course, these experiments on a floating regime of the appearance of images... So we came up with this term of *photoscenic*, literally and simultaneously photographic and scenic.

**Charlotte:** How did this rebalancing take place?

**Aurélie:** For the photoscenic pieces we start with a text...

**Vincent:** So far we have worked with Shakespeare, Euripides and Borges. For the realization of the third piece, here at Villa Kujoyama in Kyoto, the process is based on a techno-feminist science fiction novel by North American novelist Ursula K. Le. Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*. These texts have all in common "dealing" with monsters and transgressive sexualities,

they are addressing radical otherness and therefore, potentially, *alien* ecology...

**Aurélie:** When we say that we work "at Vincent's", that means literally that we re-engage the rituals and *modus operandi* of the traditional theatrical factory: dramatic writing, dramaturgical settings, set making, choice of props, rehearsals of scenes, etc.

**Vincent:** ... The deviance, or aberration, from this classic regime of theatrical work occurs in the fact that the process is stopped before the encounter with a live audience. There is no "show", but instead, we collect photographic traces of the piece-making, with the aim of replaying it, through prints and spectres, later, deferred, in a gallery or on, and sometimes behind, a theatre stage...

**Aurélie:** The method of work is always the same: we first isolate ourselves in a chosen site for a time of research-creation in residence: in 2016, we worked on a small island in Finland, in 2018 we stayed in a monastery from the 13th century located in Alentejo, Portugal and today, here, at Villa Kujoyama in Kyoto.

**Vincent:** ... during the summer solstice in Finland, in the middle of a summer heatwave in Portugal and this winter in Kyoto...

**Aurélie:** ... the different qualities, especially chromatic, of the different chosen seasons affect, and this is what we are looking for, the course of the work itself... hence the careful choice of specific geographies and periods of the year ...

**Vincent:** On spot, we transpose, edit, rehearse and perform the "play", based on the study and rewriting of the chosen texts ... with guest artist collaborators, such as Finnish choreographer-performer Simo Kellokumpu and young Swiss artist Nagi Gianni. Simo and Nagi will join us in March for three weeks of collaborative work, first here in Kyoto, then in the Nagano Mountains, and for a few days in Tokyo.



De rêves, photoscenic piece n°1, act 4 – Centre d'Art Contemporain Le Grand Café, Saint-Nazaire – 2020

**Charlotte:** Before your collaborators join you, how is the project launched?

**Aurélie:** To start with, we have already met with researchers affiliated with the Kyoto International Manga Museum to launch our research on Japanese cyberpunk since its emergence in the 1980s.

**Vincent:** As we are working on a US science fiction novel from the 70s, we are interested in the simultaneous "boom" of SF in Japan, the mutual influence between Japan and occidental designs in terms of speculative fiction, post-catastrophe representations...

**Aurélie:** In a few days we will have the chance to take pictures of manga archives from the museum's collection...

**Vincent:** As Le Guin's novel is taking place on a planet outside the solar system, under the climatic condition of permanent glaciation, we have also asked our host-researchers to orientate us towards the representation of icescapes in Japanese science fiction.

**Aurélie:** In our research on "white", in connection with the meteorological condition of the novel, we are particularly interested in how Japanese artists give materiality to snow, frost, ice, all these white materials, in the page, also white, of manga.

**Charlotte:** Since you're talking about frost and snow, I think it would be interesting for you to try to meet during your visit in Tokyo Fujiko Nakaya... You may know that her father, a physicist expert in glaciology, made a whole archive of images of ice crystals, snowflakes...

**Aurélie:** Yes, I know. I actually saw her exhibition in Tokyo two years ago. I even took a photograph of visitors in the exhibition, and this shot was part of the corpus of images of my installation *Tracks* in Toronto and New York last year.

**Vincent:** It would of course be wonderful to meet Ms. Nakaya.

**Charlotte:** You also address white materiality in Japan through the study of traditional makeup powders, *oshiroi*...

**Aurélie:** Yes indeed. This is the second axis of the research here.

**Vincent:** We establish a link between frost and white make-up powder of maiko/geishas or Kabuki actors, body powder that we also relate in the work to stardust... We learned that the first Fanzine of SF published in Japan in 1957 was called *Uchijin*... which means *cosmic dust*...

**Aurélie:** Since the beginning of our collaboration we have been interested in the processes of transformations, of metamorphoses. That's why we wish to visit workshops or factories that manufacture these powders. We would like to follow the different stages of the powder-making-process. From the mineral to the powder, from the powder to the skin, from the skin to the mask... we are interested in the question of *transition*, its dynamics, its plasticities...

**Charlotte:** Maybe you could also make research on gofun...

**Aurélie:** Gofun?

**Charlotte:** Gofun is the white pigment used in paint, obtained from shell grinding. There is a manufacturer not far from Kyoto, and Flore (Falcinelli), who is in residence at the same time as you, is approaching them. You could all go together...

**Vincent:** Perfect.

**Charlotte** (*She goes to her office shelf*): Maybe you might be interested in that too. It is charcoal painted with gofun precisely, used during tea ceremonies ... it is called *edazumi*, and it is used to ignite the fire to boil the water... (*She comes back with a twig of pristine white charcoal*)...

Vincent: It's beautiful.



February 2020 (theatre set model cryogenization) – Villa Kujoyama / Work in progress

**Aurélie:** Wow. Can we borrow it from you to shoot it at the studio?

**Charlotte:** yes, cautious, it's very fragile. I will find you more information in that direction.

(*For a while. They all look at edazumi*)

**Aurélie:** Finally, our two other research axes are glass, as part of Kansai's glasscraft, coupled with a historical study on the shift from the opaque to the optical in Japan...

**Vincent:** ... and then *momigami*, the art of crumpled paper...

**Charlotte:** For momigami, I'm going to put you in direct contact with Laurel Parker and Paul Chamard, who were residents last year, and who worked on that... So, in concrete terms, how does a workday at the Villa Kujoyama look for the duo?



**Aurélie:** Well, we alternate between dramaturgical work "at the table", around the scenic transcription of the novel and first material experiments.

**Vincent:** We experiment with things around cryogenization of theatre set models, which we make and then ice in the freezers of our studios. We have recycled for one of these frozen models a slice of agate stone left last year at the Villa by Marion Delarue ...

**Aurélie:** Then there are outdoor meetings to meet local interlocutors in relation to our different lines of research, as this week the researchers at the manga museum...

**Vincent:** We also spontaneously open gaps in our schedule in relation to the unexpected, the surprises, like the arrival of the first snowfalls on Kyoto....

**Aurélie:** And then we have also started a photographic work on the Villa itself, of the particular architecture of Kunio Kato. In this work we start around what we call a science fiction of proximity, that is to say without special effects but falling under the "already there". We would like to work with concrete, these raw masses but also the micromateriality of it ...

**Vincent:** ... Playing with the polymorphic quality of the building, the fluctuations between villa, phalanstery, sanctuary, bunker, and spaceship...

**Charlotte:** With this in mind, I suggest you should also visit the Kyoto Conference Center by Japanese architect Sachio Otani. It is contemporary of the novel you are working on, since it opened in 1966. Perhaps also it could be interesting for you in relation to your research on the notion of transition, since this is where the Kyoto Protocol was signed in 1997... I will call them and ask if it is possible to take shots in situ, I think especially of the impressive conference room ... I'll let you know as soon as possible....



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February 2020 (research at Kyoto International Manga Museum) – Villa Kujoyama / Work in progress

Villa Kujoyama, February 12, 2020.

Transcription, translation and images: Pétrel I Roumagnac (duo)  
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