

FRANÇOIS CURLET



AIR DE PARIS

FRANÇOIS CURLET

Born in 1967 in Paris

Lives and works in Arles and Piacé

François Curlet has been developing a body of work since the end of the 1980s in which the material world is dismantled through a poetry of the everyday. Using as much artifact as philosophy, the artist develops a strategy where associations of ideas are transformed into allegories. From the existential to the trivial, his work invites reinvention, surprise, using a vocabulary close to a joyful skepticism as much as to cynical laughter.

« Cultural hijacking, piracy and contrarian repurposing have built a reputation for a mix of wit and the poetic that assails the social, political and cultural implications of the everyday objects and readymade signifiers churned out by our consumer society. [...] The sign-objects Curlet has been producing for the last thirty years are a poetic response to the «semantic rain» that pours down on us daily in an economic dialectic combining know-how and message-massage, use value and exchange value, consumer commodity and promotional item. Sometimes redolent of the vanitas, his art of repartee plays adroitly on objects and words, lays bare hidden meanings and taboos and urges viewers down the trail blazed by Robert Filliou's reassessment of our dependence on material things and modern lifestyles. «Objects outlast people,» Curlet explains. «We make use of them, but in the end they come out on top.»

SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

Centre National des Arts Plastiques - CNAP, Paris, France
 Collection de la province du Hainaut, Belgium
 FRAC Corse, Corte, France
 FRAC Aquitaine, Bordeaux, France
 FRAC Languedoc Roussillon, Montpellier, France
 FRAC Île de France, Paris, France
 FRAC Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Dunkirk, France
 FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, Reims, France
 Fond Municipal d'Art Contemporain de la ville de Paris, France
 Fondation Lafayette, Paris, France
 Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, France
 The George Economou Collection, Athens, Greece
 IAC, Villeurbanne, France
 Musée des arts contemporains du Grand-Hornu, Belgium
 MNAM, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris
 MUDAC, Lausanne, Switzerland
 Pinault Collection, Paris, France
 Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven, Netherlands
 TATE MODERN, London, United Kingdom

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS



Exhibition views

Trois fois par jour

Air de Paris, Romainville, France

2019

Photo : © Marc Damage



Exhibition views

Trois fois par jour

Air de Paris, Romainville, France

2019

Photo : © Marc Domage



Exhibition views

Trois fois par jour

Air de Paris, Romainville, France

2019

Photo : © Marc Domage

Crésus&Crusoé

Curated by Denis Gielen

MACS Grand-Hornu, Boussu, Belgium

24.11.2018 — 10.03.2019

MACS Grand-Hornu presents François Curlet's first institutional exhibition in Belgium. Entitled *Crésus & Crusoé*, this monographic exhibition is an opportunity to discover a poetic body of work that plays with the cultural, political and economic signs of today's world, following mechanisms of association, displacement and condensation similar to those observed, since Freud, in the formation of dreams or witticisms.

Almost twenty years after *Voisins officiels*, the decks of visiting cards he presented to the inhabitants of the Grand-Hornu coron for the inauguration of the MACS, François Curlet is once again the guest of the Museum, this time devoting a major retrospective to his work.

Through misappropriation, counterfeiting and counter-use, the artist makes a name for herself with a sense of humor and poetics that virulently question the social, political and economic implications of the everyday object and ready-made signs produced by our consumer society. Heir to the Dadaist jokes of Francis Picabia and the pop onomatopoeia of Claes Oldenburg, his poetic, incisive approach is based on an art of visual aphorism that stands up to the intrusive politics of contemporary communication: advertising, video clips, SMS, Facebook...

As in the catalog co-published with Triangle Books, the exhibition is divided into three 'sections' (object, painting, cinema). It begins with an ensemble dominated by the misappropriation of industrial signs that François Curlet has been practicing since the 1990s alongside other artists of his generation, such as Franck Scurti, with whom he exhibited his work at the Centre Pompidou in 1993.

Close to the ragpicker's aggregates that thinker Walter Benjamin identified, along with the city flâneur, with modernity, his works archive the era by collecting and recycling its scraps, like the series of sprays on copper, *Frozen Feng Shui*, stenciled since 2013 from scraps of industrial cuttings and likened in his mind to "ghosts of productivity". Domestic yet urban, chic yet poor, decorative yet shapeless, these metallic paintings testify above all to François Curlet's penchant for the oxymoron, a figure of speech that, like the very title of the exhibition, brings together Croesus & Crusoe, two contradictory terms.

Obtained by welding together a Jaguar Type E and a hearse, in reference to the film *Harold & Maude* (1971), *Speed Limit*, first presented at the Palais de Tokyo in 2013, does not feature in the exhibition as a sculpture, but as the subject of the very short film *Jonathan Livingston*, in which this incongruous vehicle is driven by a mortician apparently lost in the middle of nowhere.

Alongside this first film to date, three new productions are also being shown, all equally sassy and incisive: *Air Graham*, in which two mimes reproduce a virtual double of a glass pavilion by Dan Graham; *The Yummy Patriot*, which sketches the costumed portrait of a scruffy, gluttonous hussar; and *L'Agitée*, a film produced by MACS, which updates the legendary figure of the Pied Piper of Hamelin in the guise of Laurence Bibot.



Exhibition views

Mordre et Tenir, Chapitre 3

Air de Paris, Romainville, France

2022

Photo : © Marc Domage



Exhibition views

Uni·e·s par le feu

Magasins Généraux, Pantin, France

2022

Photo : © Mathis Payet-Descombes



Exhibition views

Uni·e·s par le feu

Magasins Généraux, Pantin, France

2022

Photo : © Mathis Payet-Descombes

Fugu

Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France

27.02 — 20.05.2013

For his first solo exhibition in Paris, François Curlet, an expert at détournement, reveals a distanced worldview that challenges the clichés of the day. Advertising slogans, human interest stories, or everyday objects give way to a subtle poetry, both existential and demotic. Out of this arises a system built on paradoxes in which – like the Fugu fish so highly valued in Japan – a delicious dish can become a deadly poison. The visitor fluctuates between lighthearted intellectual pleasure and a latent seriousness that could manifest itself at any moment.

«Fugu» presents at Palais de Tokyo an extensive selection of pieces from the period between 1985 and 2013. Since the end of the 1980s, the artist has been developing a body of work in which the material world is dismantled, disturbed, and distorted through the poetry of the day to day. By having recourse to the artifact as much as to philosophy, the artist is developing a strategy in which free associations are transformed into allegories, and the mind is seized by surprising dialogs of forms that set the power of imagination in motion and permanently reinvent our natural and material environment. From the existential to the trivial, François Curlet's fields of interest seem to have no limits, no one territory. Encouraging critical thinking, his work is open to reinvention and surprise, using a vocabulary as close to joyful skepticism as it is to cynical laughter.

Atomic as it is, his work does not obey any algorithm, and each piece seems to proceed from its own theorem instead, while François Curlet searches within each object for its possible «radioactive» qualities. Micro-history, human interest stories, historic events, political news, advertising slogans, social anecdotes, derivative work, and puns are fertile ground for the artist's work. Hallucinatory vision of things, the work of François Curlet cultivates such borderline states, where the object fluctuates between many fictions and realities, pleasure and poison, just like the eponymous fish, "Fugu". In the wake of artists such as Erik Satie, George Brecht, Jef Geys, John Knight or the film *Mon oncle d'Amérique* (1979) by Alain Resnais, François Curlet creates a universe in which humor is also used to unravel social protocol.



Exhibition views

Fugu

Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France

2013

Photo : © André Morin



Exhibition views

Fugu

Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France

2013

Photo : © André Morin



Exhibition views

Fugu

Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France

2013

Photo : © André Morin

Dr. Curlet reçoit Jos de Gruyter et Harald Thys

Frac Île-de-France, Paris, France

13.09 — 18.11.2007

While Brussels has always served as François Curlet's anchorage point, he has never stopped traveling throughout France and the rest of the world in search of experiences to help inspire his multiform creations, including the two new pieces presented at the Plateau.

An heir to the artists John Knight and Jef Geys, François Curlet creates a unique fusion between conceptual art, Dada actions, pop imagery and Situationist daydreams. Utilizing a large variety of tools and materials, his work takes its inspiration from fairy tales, television, economic exchanges, and communication systems (contemporary media networks that he willingly manipulates). These different elements (objects, signs, and messages) are subjected to various transformations that either diversify or invalidate their regular functioning. François Curlet works as if with a magnifying glass, deforming the ordinary until the unlikely emerges. Master of distortion of cultural codes, he manages to extract the playful, poetic, narrative, and caustically humorous nature out of all things he touches.

François Curlet produces visual worlds where fiction and reality collide, "remixing" objects and images with his very own brand of humor, and creating a parallel universe of his own.

At the Plateau, François Curlet has decided to invite the Belgian duo of Jos De Gruyter & Harald Thys to join in on his exhibition, during which he will be presenting two new works:

- Recently acquired by our collection, *Rocking Chair*, "with its plaid cover suspended over the back right hand side, like a small gravitational anomaly that reveals a ghostly presence", resembles an everyday object that is slightly disengaged from its primary function.

- Shot in the spring of 2007, the film *French Farce* transports the viewer inside a café at the turn of the 19th century located at the Château-Gontier, during which a group of retired persons play cards while being watched by a young British woman. Commentary on the scene: a very "Duchamp-esque" world.



Exhibition views

Dr. Curlet reçoit Jos de Gruyter et Harald Thys

Frac Île-de-France, Paris, France

2007

Photo : © Marc Domage

SELECTED ARTWORKS



Santon Andy
2024
Styrofoam, resin acrylic paint, wood, fabrics
190 x 130 x 70 cm
Unique



T.V. Set
 2010
 Granite, marble
 100 x 80 x 12 cm
 Unique



Willy Wonka plus

2005

3500 individual chocolate bars (100g), aluminium foil, 18-carat gold leaf, cardboard, 2 color prints

24 cardboard boxes: 35x25x21 cm + 1 empty folded cardboard box + prints

2 prints: 70 x 100 cm

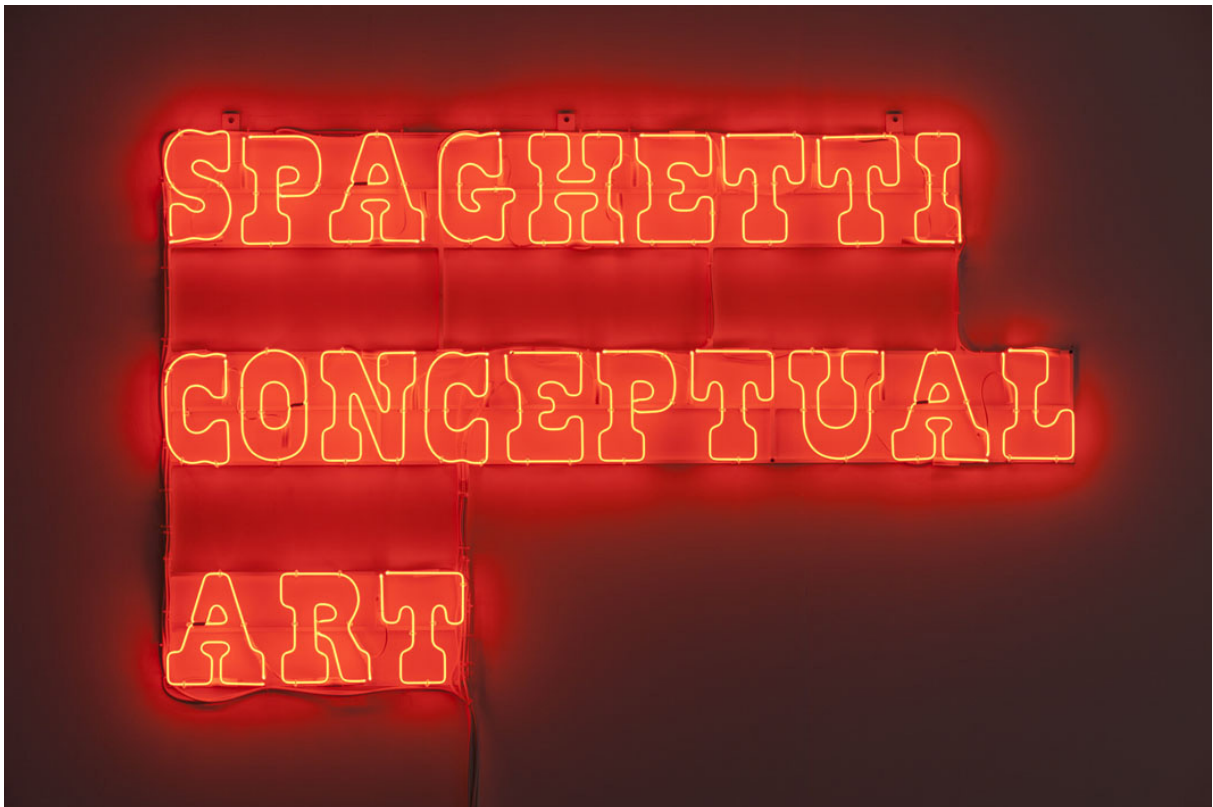
Unique



Chipster #4
 2015
 Copper, wood frame, spray painting, varnish
 80 x 120 x 2,5 cm
 Unique



B.O.G.O.F (buy one get one free)
 2007
 aluminum-plastic-nylon strap and Panton chair
 150 x 150 cm
 Unique



Western
2005-2006
Neon sign (red), electric system and transformers
ca. 105 x 230 cm
Unique



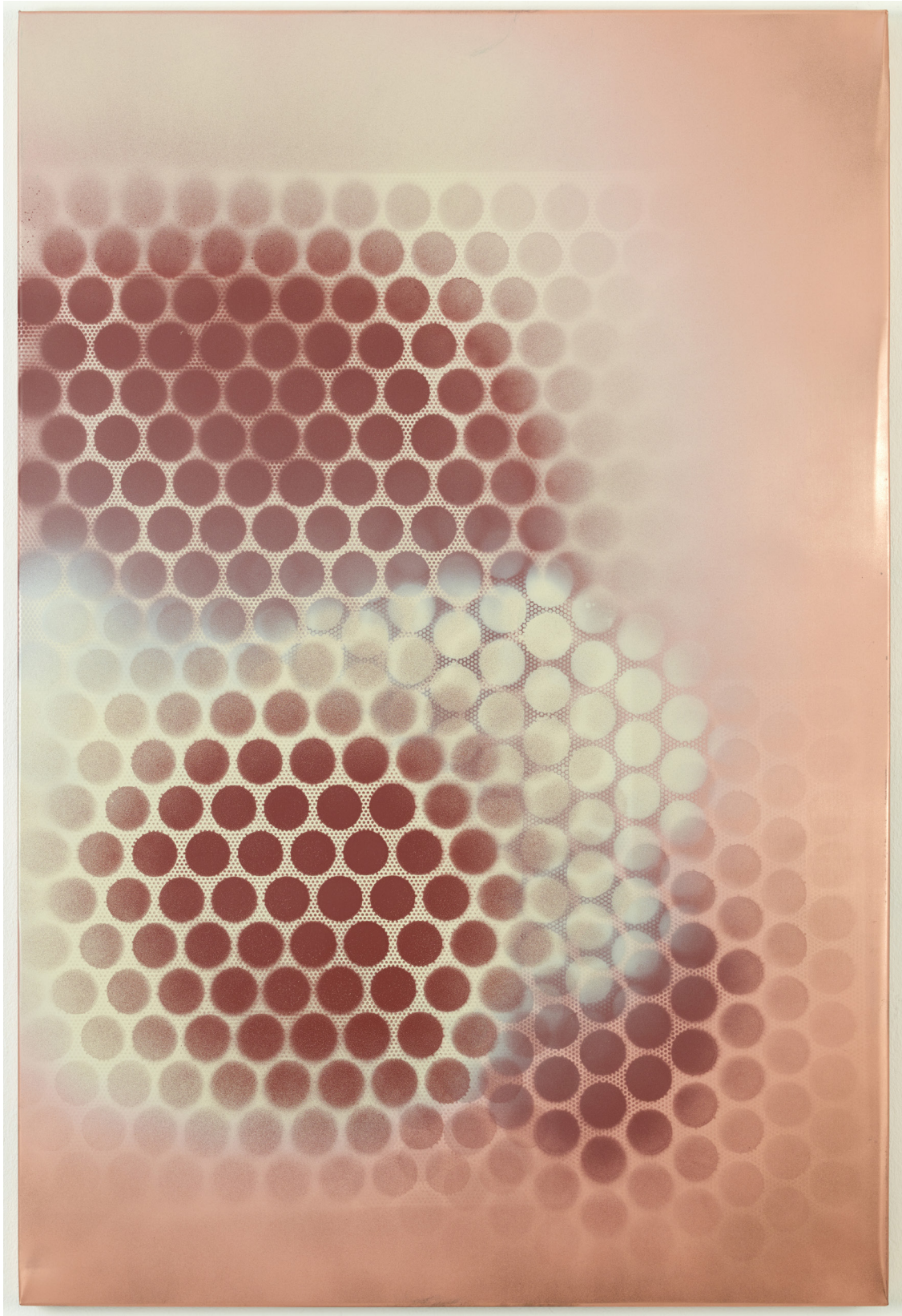
Clockwork
1998
25 silkscreen umbrellas
Variable dimensions
Unique



Immobile
1998
Plastic, Plexiglas, pvc, screen printing, plant foam, clay balls
Variable dimensions
Edition of 3



Charlie's flag
 2005
 Wool, bamboo
 150 x 100 cm
 Edition of 3



Waffle #7
 2013-2014
 Copper, wood frame, spray painting
 92 x 61 x 2,5 cm
 Unique



MilDo
2016
Lacquered wood, Plexiglas, guitare strings, eyelets
74,5 x 63 x 3,8 cm
Unique



Cancel Culture
2021
Assembly : rollator, battery charger «Poo» and cable
90 x 50 x 33 cm
Unique



Mega Mug
2021
Ceramic
23,5 x 25 x 19 cm
Unique



Untitled (Air de Paris Hilton)
2019
Borosilicate glass, nylon thread
19 x 7 x 4 cm
Edition of 3