



THE VOLCANO PROJECT

christine
arveil

“Site-specific” instalação com 70 trabalhos, 17 pinturas quadradas criadas a partir de verniz para violino com pigmentos sob madeira, uma série de 50 desenhos a grafite montados em suportes individuais de metal e 3 esculturas que incorporam basalto.

Site-specific installation of 70 works: 17 large square paintings created from violin varnish and pigments over wood, a series of 50 graphite drawings presented on individual metal stands, and three self-standing sculptures that incorporate basalt.



Mendiants – 104x35x25cm, lava stones, gold leaf and lacquer on wood

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11 de Setembro a 17 de Outubro, 2009
Academia das Artes, São Miguel Açores, Portugal

Completou-se praticamente um ano que Christine Arveil visitou a Academia das Artes e apresentou o seu projecto. Desde logo a ideia revelou-se de particular interesse a merecer apoio não só pela pertinência do conceito “Volcano” que sustenta todos os trabalhos aqui expostos como pelo romantismo que nos remete para o local ilha e sua inerente fragilidade e evolução.

A fragmentação fantasiada nos desenhos e as cores fortes, principalmente os vermelhos, cuidadosamente conseguidos pela sobreposição dos pigmentos e vernizes que perpetuam os corpos embebidos na sua materialidade e possível explanação, seduzem o olhar e conduzem obrigatoriamente o espectador a descodificar a sua narrativa, que possivelmente tem como preceito o tumulto de algo que cresce lentamente e se expande. Foi esta sensação, que confesso ter vivido quando pela primeira vez encarei a sua obra e a sua opção por formas obscuras e fascinantes.

“Volcano Project” traduz a proposta que a Direcção da Academia das Artes dos Açores tem vindo a desenvolver, ao apresentar ao público uma programação no campo das Artes Plásticas balizada não só pela sua contemporaneidade e qualidade, bem como pela novidade, quer ao nível de artistas e trabalhos, quer mesmo ao nível da produção dos eventos, uma das prioridades desta Associação.

Nina Medeiros

Presidente da Academia das Artes





Children's tears cannot wipe hell – 120x120cm, pigments in violin varnish on wood

Conheci Christine Arveil numa manhã chuvosa de Junho, quando o Verão teimava em não chegar a Boston. Eu próprio, recém-chegado, encontrara aqui um pretexto para conversar na língua de Molière com alguém que me trazia uma mensagem que não precisava de dicionários ou de códigos de decifração.

O projecto Vulcão era algo mais do que um conjunto de obras marcadas pelo brilho e pela cor, pelo enigmático mundo daquilo que a razão não atinge mas que a alma entende acolher, deixando-se conquistar aos poucos até à entrega total.

Ele é o resultado de uma conquista pela artista do imaginário que envolve as ilhas atlânticas dos Açores, o seu povo e as suas tradições. Ele é também o fruto de uma paixão pela vida, a chama que ilumina e a lava que renova. Cada vez que a terra treme nasce uma nova etapa. Cai a máscara do tempo e revela-se a personalidade da artista. Ainda assim enigmática, pacífica e pulsante. Tal como as suas obras que agora ficarão expostas na Academia das Artes, em Ponta Delgada, nos Açores. Bravo Christine!

Paulo Cunha Alves
Cônsul-Geral de Portugal em Boston
Julho 2009

I met Christine Arveil on a rainy June morning, when the summer still shied away from Boston. New to the city, I found in this meeting an occasion to speak the language of Molière, and converse with someone whose message I needed neither dictionaries nor codes to decipher:

The Volcano project is something more than an ensemble of pictures characterised by their brightness and color, by the enigmatic world created that only the soul can understand, beyond rational thinking, and shelter until its supreme conquest or complete surrender:

This work is the result of the artist's conquest of the imaginary that involves the Atlantic islands of the Azores, its people and traditions. It is the fruit of her passion for life, the flame that brings light, and the lava that rejuvenates the land. Each time the earth shakes, it gives birth to another stage. The mask of time falls and the artist's personality reveals itself, enigmatic, peaceful, pulsing, just like her works of art now exhibited at the Academia das Artes in Ponta Delgada, Azores. Bravo Christine!

Paulo Cunha Alves
Consul General of Portugal in Boston
July 2009

J'ai rencontré Christine Arveil un matin pluvieux du mois de juin, pendant un été qui ne voulait pas se montrer; ici à Boston. Moi-même récemment arrivé, je trouvai là un prétexte pour parler la langue de Molière avec quelqu'un qui m'amenait un message qui n'avait pas besoin de dictionnaire ou de codes pour être déchiffré.

Le projet Volcan était déjà quelque chose de plus qu'un simple ensemble d'œuvres marquées par la couleur et l'éclat, par l'univers énigmatique que la raison ne maîtrise pas mais que l'âme accueille, en se laissant conquérir; petit à petit, jusqu'à la soumission totale.

Il est le résultat de la conquête par l'artiste de l'imaginaire qui enveloppe les îles atlantiques des Açores, son peuple et ses traditions.

Il est aussi le fruit d'une passion pour la vie, qu'une flamme illumine et que la lave renove. Chaque fois que la terre tremble, une nouvelle étape commence.

Tombe le masque du temps et la personnalité de l'artiste se révèle, énigmatique, pacifique et vivante, tout comme ses œuvres qui bientôt seront exposées à L'Académie des Arts de Ponta Delgada, aux Açores. Bravo Christine!

Paulo Cunha Alves
Consul Général du Portugal à Boston
Juillet 2009



Spinesax – 120x120cm, pigments in violin varnish over gesso on wood



Left behind masquarades I – 120x120cm, pigments in violin varnish over gesso on wood



Left behind masquarades 2 – 120x120cm, pigments in violin varnish on wood

I first came to São Miguel in October 2007, following three years of writing my novel *La Faille / The Fault*. I explored the island, enough to fall in love with it, looking for its magnetic connection with the imaginary world that was becoming *The Volcano Project*. When I returned in the Autumn of 2008, I had already created a set of paintings in red lacquer using violin varnish as my medium, had drafted an art manifesto for the project, and was moving deeper into my own volcano, driven by the power of a vision rather than a mere artist fantasy.

My surrealist novel created the fictional character of a sculptor who isolates himself for three years inside a volcanic fault in search of the meaning of art creation, ultimately challenging his own strength. This character's pursuit engaged me more powerfully over time. It became a lead, a comfort, a presence in my steps. Aware of my mounting obsession, my husband, himself a musician resolved to find a place that would replicate the setting of my novel. One morning at sunrise, we drove to Ferraria.

I keep returning to Ferraria – the disappeared island, Ilha Sabrina, with fascination. There, at the end of a winding road, lays a desolate field of volcanic stones and a hot spring surging into the sea water. At mid-tide, between rocks, one can bathe in secluded warm water while wild ocean waves break close by. Early morning or after sunset, the area is back to complete isolation; ruins of a house stand, strange solace. The place is stone for stone, wave for wave, the landscape that my novel had depicted.

This wild volcanic field pouring into the sea merges with my vision and artwork in cumulating strengths. It is more than a metaphor: rather than describing a feeling, it engages a process of ongoing creation. Reality cranks in with my imagination to haul the water and whirl the wind of unsuspected energies – as if nature intensifies its presence.

I started drawing the black lava, looking for a proper scale. I hunted for stones there, spending entire days to find a rock which meaning would be striking. When I returned to Boston, I carried back some stones, resuming with an old temptation for sculpture. Already, the figures in the paintings were carved rather than painted. At the studio, I experienced the strength of the basalt: I could endlessly draw a fragment that my eyes would magnify differently every day. As we were preparing the installation for the *Academia das Artes*, these drawings took momentum.

I have always wondered how degrees of personal intensity and life hardship play into art creation. One commonly hears that who embraces art does not live at a “normal” pace. I believe that the creative process encompasses all human dimensions, at both the individual and the global scale; it reflects on their fragments. At times, the intensity of the inner self is such that one seeks extreme experiences in hope of finding balance; I go to the sea and stones that once were lava and fire.

Installing my work mid-Atlantic links two times of my life, two continents. Education allowed me to walk this bridge: I dedicate the show to my teachers. In São Miguel, I could work, and I also found friends who welcome this work: they made the *Volcano Project* possible with great generosity; *une amitié qu'il faut graver dans la pierre*.

Christine Arveil, Ponta Delgada, September 2009



Le courage d'un enfant – 120x120cm, pigments in violin varnish over gesso on wood





Stone drawings – 21 x 29cm, graphite pencil on paper



Devorez-vous les uns les autres – 120x120cm, pigments in violin varnish over gesso on wood



La Vague – 38x38x115cm, lava stone and gesso structure

As I view Christine's "Volcano" project, her paintings have the hypnotic effect of compelling me to look and feel and question what draws me to her unique imagery. First, I am aware of intense (physical) heat, liquid gold and blood-red lava so amazingly conveyed in many coats of violin varnish...and yet cool, shiny, almost liquid at the surface. Strange, sometimes menacing figures appear and disappear.... giant heads, pulsing hearts, body organs, and I find myself checking every corner for the appearance of a new element, often a face, to emerge. Christine claims that the figures are less preconceived than "found" deeply embedded or sometimes hiding in the varnish. Apparitions will appear almost on their own, although I like to think they may sometimes find her:

Being a photographer; when I think about "Volcano" and how Christine creates this work, I am reminded of my own hand-made platinum prints. Christine begins with a blank wood panel and I with a sheet of water color paper. She treats her panel with gesso and begins the tedious process of multiple coatings of red varnish. I coat my paper with a mixture of platinum and palladium and, in the developer, my images come up instantly, an advantage of the photographic process.

For more than a century there has been an ongoing discussion and comparison of painting and photography. Photography is credited with being able to record what the lens is seeing with great accuracy. It can record images instantly and with much less effort than painting. The photographer can make multiple copies of an image, while original paintings are unique, but both deal with two dimensional composition and design. The photographer is both blessed and cursed with the lenses' ability to capture subject matter; since he cannot easily rearrange elements in a picture, and a painter's creation of an image on canvas is limited only by his or her imagination and skill.

Christine's drawings of lava rocks demonstrate her mastery of both observation and invention. She dissects the anatomy of the rock, creating exquisite portraits from different angles, but then molds them into nearly architectural or cubist interpretations with the skill of a fine draftsman and inspired visionary.

Since traditional photography faithfully records the "real world", there is a clear difference between photographer and painter: Were I to photograph a volcano, I too would feel the heat, but my images would only record gasses, lava, and fire, with the accuracy of a lens at a safe distance and, surely no figures would be lurking in the frame.

Fine painting and fine photography both require enormous creativity. The better painters and photographers have a vision and have learned that "art" is understanding how to transform a subject into how you want it to look and feel. Christine's intuitive power of observation has helped me view my own work with much sharper insight. She has inspired my first forays into abstract photography in which I also look for shapes and "figures" and new textures to discover. She has emboldened me to venture in new directions as I begin the project called WaterWorks. On a recent visit to Christine's studio, I waited for the moment she would leave the room. I walked closely to one of the paintings and ran my finger down the surface and, as I suspected, they feel like water. They compel the viewer to "look into" the painting. It's as though I am looking into a red sea. It has been a privilege to witness the evolution of Christine's special "Volcano."

Sal Lopes, Photographer
www.salopes.com
Boston, August 2009



First right of refusal – 120x120cm, pigments in violin varnish on wood



To be young, violated and bright – 120x120cm, pigments in violin varnish over gesso on wood



Noir c'est noir – 120x120cm, pigments and gesso on wood



Christine Arveil – Furnas, Outubro 2008

Born in 1958, France, Bostonian artist Christine Arveil is the first of her working-class family to enter university, achieving a master's degree in classics and French literature.

Now a painter and writer for 30 years, Arveil's expertise spans from Eastern calligraphy and Western medieval text illustration to restoration of lacquers. She authored fifty visionary short stories, a novel, autobiographical texts, and early poems. Weaving words and painting into a composite media has always been core to her work.

In 1979, Arveil joined the Parisian studio of Master Luis Ansa to study Oriental brush calligraphy and lacquer. After eight years of apprenticeship with several studios, C. Arveil was presented as the only western artist by the Japanese embassy's in its Contemporary Calligraphy exhibition.

Over the following years she expanded her technique to early European painting processes, uncovered formulas through archival research. Arveil focus settled on forms of painting not related to oil on stretched canvas. Her reenactment of medieval manuscripts painting was hailed by experts for their accuracy, and exhibited at the Centre Pompidou.

She then entered an ascetic period in which black and white deconstructed word compositions proposed a new interpretation of Eastern brush technique. Contemporary calligraphers Abdallah Akar and Hassan Masoudy introduced her to a different spatiality from that found in Chinese art, leading her to work in 1992 with Brahim Alaoui, Head Curator of Contemporary Art at the Arab World Institute in Paris.

Moving to the United States in 1997, Christine Arveil first established her studio in Ann Arbor, MI. This move signaled a return to lacquer: the previous abstracts evolved into expressionist images. Her expertise with lacquer giving her a unique perspective on the challenges of restoring instruments, she worked with Joseph Curtin, luthier and 2005 MacArthur Fellow. Her research has been published in *The Strad*, presented in a BBC interview and at international violin makers conventions. But soon she returned to creation exclusively, using this unique violin varnish technique as her medium.

Christine Arveil's treatment of colors and materials progressively became more extreme. Multilayered monochromatic works use optical characteristics of the violin varnish to create changing images that elude the immobility of representation. Intense colors evoking lava flows emerge from the manipulation of pigments with tools borne out of the violin restoration and often foreign to classical painting. Some paintings evolve in three-dimensional works.

In 2009, she is completing *The Volcano Project*: a new, large-scale body of work that unifies painting with writing. A novel and a series of lacquer-on-wood red panels, combine identities in what the artist calls an experimental form of ubiquity. *The Volcano Project* builds a utopia while reflecting on the creative process of art.

Christine Arveil has taught painting in museums in France and the United States and regularly exhibits her work in solo and group shows.



