

P O R T

F O L I O

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— JUSTINE
BLAU —

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PHUSIS

Metaphor for natural phenomena in the macro and micro world

The project *Phusis* portrays soap bubbles as a metaphor for natural phenomena in the macro and micro world, interfering with human gestures. Soap bubbles are appearing on screen, floating, breathing, falling, growing and exploding.

We observe them being manipulated, among some pharmaceutical and chemical glass utensils, forming precarious still lives. The scenes represent the process of life and a laboratory context.

The bubbles seem to evolve as much in micro and macro environments, whether underwater, celestial, terrestrial or intrauterine. While their structures evoke cells, natural organisms, plants, animals, planets, atoms, particles, honeycombs, foam. The word “phusis”, designates in Ancient Greek “nature”, as opposed to the “artificial world”. It used to refer to impulses, as well as processes of growth and strength in nature, to finally signify a more distanced representation.

This project was carried out with magicians Vincent Wüthrich and Pierre-Yves Fusier and can be developed in various forms : a single channel video, a multiple scree installation and photographs.

The project has been produced thanks to the Carte Blanche Film Fund, Luxembourg and the Fondation d'Été, Luxembourg

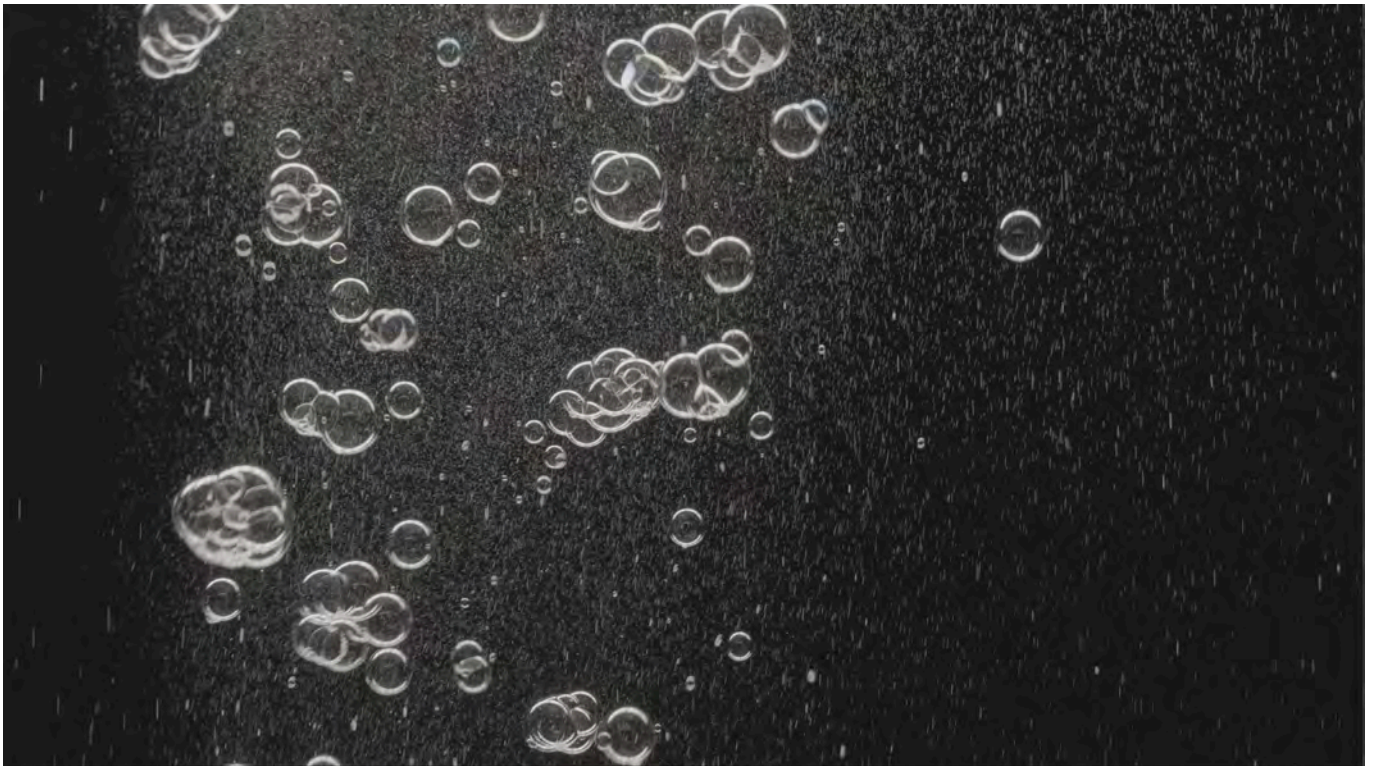


DATE : 2023

MEDIUM : Video, 16.18 min
projected as a single video and as an installation on multiple
screens (various durations, as well as photos)

VIDEO : <https://vimeo.com/789768057>
PASSWORD : life as nature 2023





HORS-SOL

Footprints : a journey through time and human's aspirations of emancipation

This video has been created as part of a residency leading towards the exhibition New Minett, organised by Cie Eddi van Tsui. The project explored space mining in relation to previous extracting activities in Luxembourg when the steel industry was thriving. The video features two legs leaving marks behind while walking, dancing and jumping on a red, dusty ground, in a desperate attempt to fly off. The piece refers to the transhumanist agenda to leave our planet for another one.

“Yet, or because of it, this transhumanist storyline, or pseudo-story, does inevitably fascinate us. As it seems to rekindle our longing for a future, for a “sacred” form. Unless, of course, it’s just a way to outrun the problem, a blast off assembling some vanities. Casting off and taking off one last time, to finally become heroes across some set boundaries, man’s death finally sublimated. What about us, Nietzsche’s “last man”, we are no longer sure of anything, even, and above all, of the difference between virtual and real? Wandering, floating in space, straddling on some debris. Is there life on Mars? Or, still trying to make sense of our life on earth in a different way, like some communities have tried before us, and as Justine Blau’s work invites us to do.” (text by Julien Cueille, extract, translated from French).



EXHIBITION : New Minett, Kerschthal - De terres rouges en terres rouges, by Cie Eddi van Tsui

DATE : 2022

MEDIUM : Video, 10 min

VIDEO : <https://vimeo.com/755569754>
PASSWORD : transhumanism 2022



JE SUIS UN MORCEAU DE PAYSAGE

Sound installation with Adriana, Eve, Soraya, Katy and Sofia sharing their "landscape of origin"

This sound installation *Je suis un morceau de paysage* (I am a piece of landscape), examines the personal connection to the land in the context of migration and displacement and how it feels when one returns and some of the landscapes have disappeared.

The piece deals with notions of nostalgia as well solastalgia. Adriana, Eve, Soraya, Katy and Sofia live or work in Esch-sur-Alzette and they share with us about their places of origin, the one that they have left behind, but which has also left them. Because everything is in movement, and we live in very transformative times. Identity is so often related to a country and a nationality, abstract concepts, while it is even more connected to a place, nature which we have watched, touched, smelled, brushed against, climbed and shared with others. How do we deal with the loss? And what remains in us of the natural landscapes and territories that we forsake? As they are still in us. The past remains in the present and language works as a magical tool, which for a moment vividly gives flesh to lost paradises. The work becoming a sensory experience.



EXHIBITION : Annexe, Esch 2022

DATE : 2021

MEDIUM : Sound installation, 10 min

VIDEO : <https://vimeo.com/700925473>

PASSWORD : les mots 2021

PHOTOS CREDITS : Mike Zenari





ENSEMENCEMENT

A transmutable installation over the length of a festival

The installation *Ensemencement* was created as part of the collaborative project RESSAC/RE with curator and director Stéphane Ghislain Roussel.

It consists of six flags adorned with texts and motifs related to botany, biology, philosophy and sociology, engaged with nature, pollination, reproduction, astronomy, as well as Hildegard von Bingen. The flags symbolise institutional entities, which are slowly being deconstructed throughout the festival. They act as a modular structure, transforming over time. Filled with indigenous wildflower seeds (cornflowers, poppies and daisies), that were slowly being propelled via wind force they have participated in the pollination of the area. During the length of the festival, the flags have accompanied a series of musical performances *Dialogue avec les bruits du silence*, *Dialogue avec les astres* and *Dialogue avec les climats* conceptualised by Stéphane Ghislain Roussel, before finally being transformed into a “big top”, settled on the ruins of Esch-sur-Sûre Castle, by means to host a participatory *Agora* with artists, historians, scientists and activists on questions related to shared ecosystems.

The flags measure 1m x 3m and were created with recycled bed linen on which images were printed using the cyanotype process.



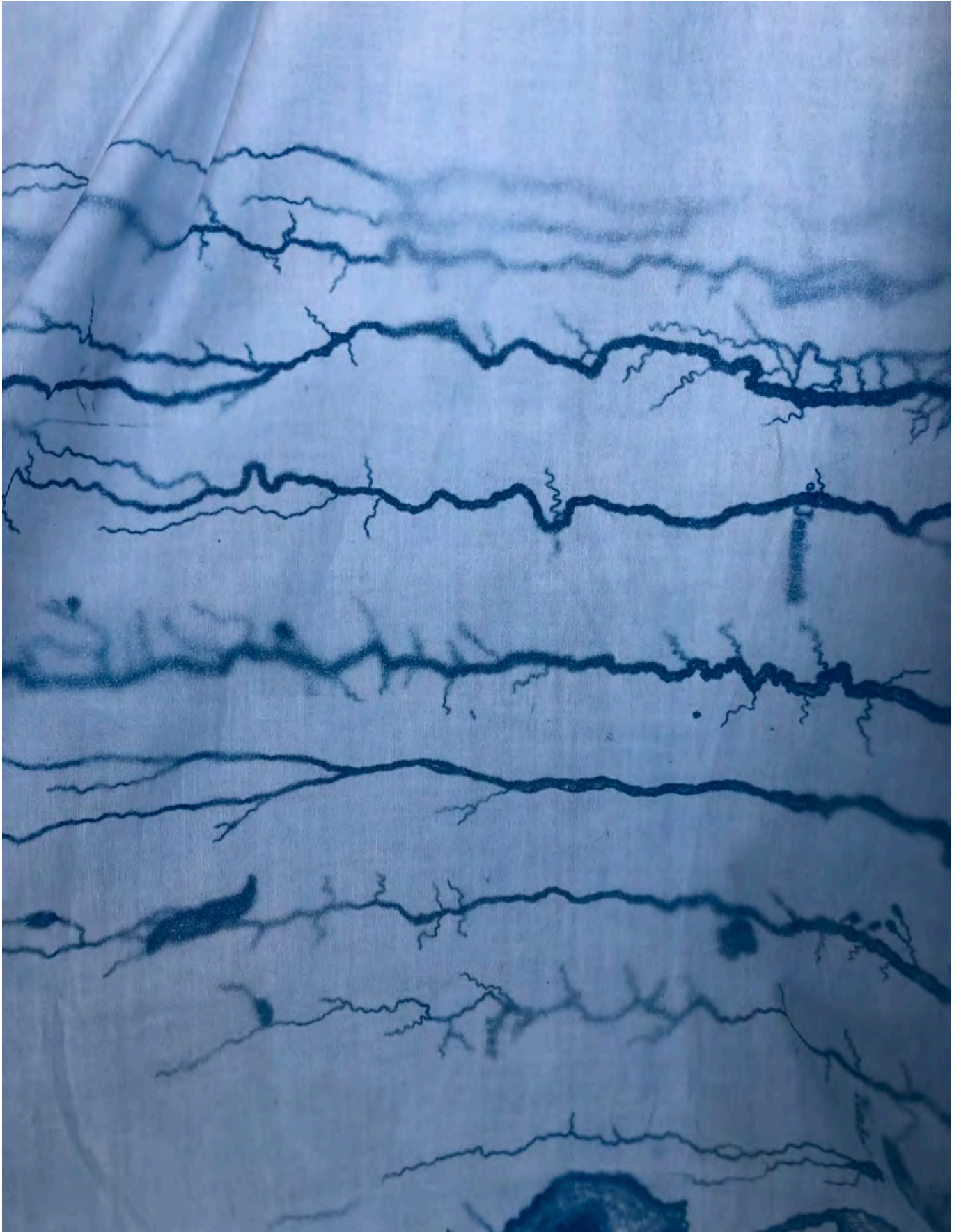
EXHIBITION : Waterwalls Festival, Esch-sur-Sûre

DATE : 2021

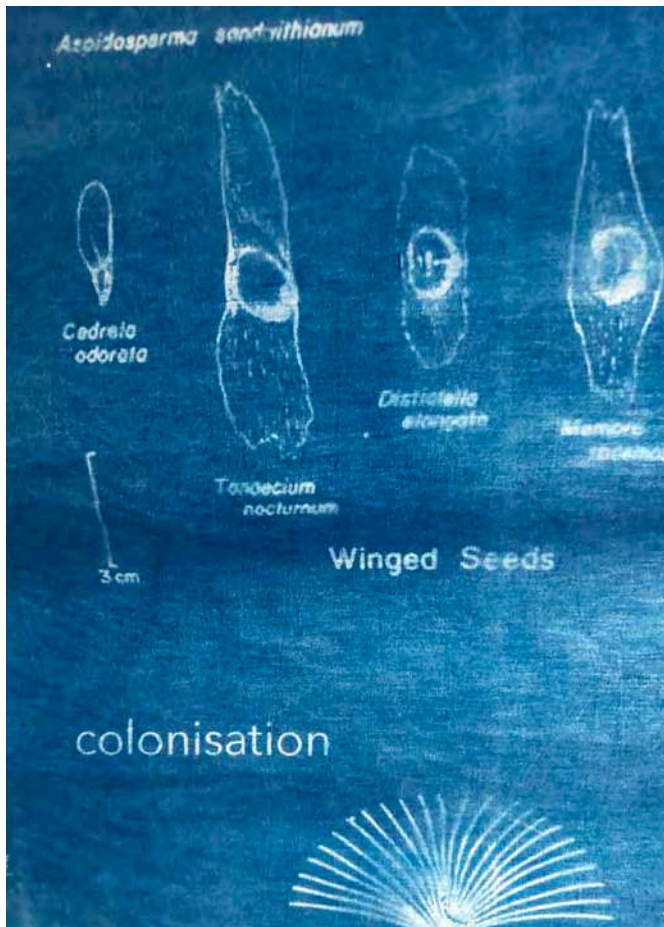
MEDIUM : Cyanotypes on cotton linen, wooden mast

PROJECT : Ressac/re, a project in collaboration with curator and director Stéphane Ghislain Roussel

PHOTOS CREDITS : on Page 13 : Pol Linden









VIDA INERTE (physis kruptesthai philei)

The De-extinction project

Endemic to the Galapagos Islands, cucumber *Sicyos villosus* was collected by Charles Darwin during his journey on the Beagle (1831–36) but is now extinct. This forlorn member of the Cucurbitaceae family is still known to science thanks only to a single specimen preserved in the Sainsbury Laboratory of the Cambridge University Herbarium, where Darwin's complete botanical collection is preserved. After reading that a group of contemporary scientists were hoping to de-extinct *Sicyos villosus* using biotechnologies that could recover its DNA from Darwin's specimen, artist Justine Blau began to investigate what it means to bring a species back to life. Undertaking a journey to understand the desire for de-extinction and what it was, exactly, that science was now trying to save.

Through her encounters with researchers and scientists in herbaria and seed banks, as well as her travels to the Galapagos - where she sought out the *Sicyos villosus* after being told that it might still inhabit the archipelago, but remains undetected - she uncovered a matrix of contradictions that radically challenge the modern scientific conservation complex. As modern science projects its ambition for rationality onto the mysteries of life, nature itself withdraws, hiding among the magic of images and narratives that veil its furtive purpose. As Blau uncovers the conservation complex, her camera also discovers another potency of nature held in abeyance.

The project embraces a selection of texts, photographs, sculptures and videos that are every time newly adapted in relation to the exhibition context. A book will be released in fall 2023 with Berlin-based editor K.Verlag.

The project was possible thanks to the *Centre Culturel Opderschmelz*, Dudelange, Luxembourg ; the *Aide à la création et à la diffusion en photographie*, *Centre national d'audiovisuel (CNA)*, Luxembourg and the *Bourse d'aide à la création, au perfectionnement et au recyclage artistiques*, the *Ministry of Culture* in Luxembourg.



DATE : 2018 - 2022

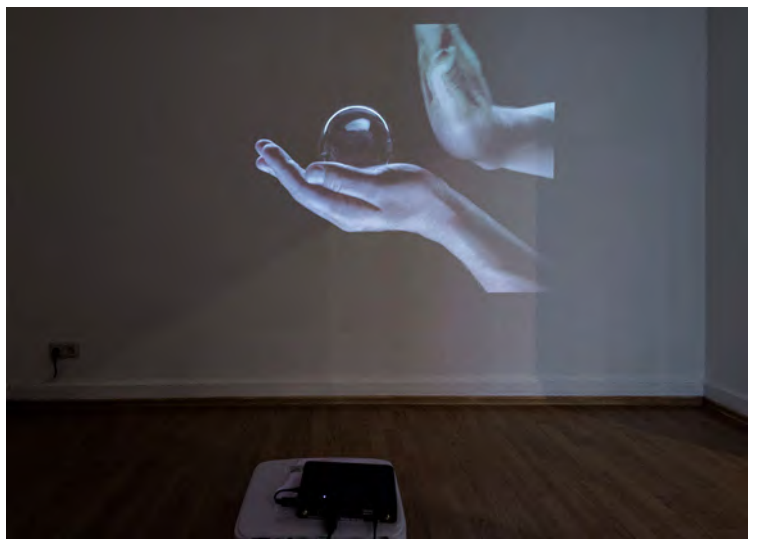
PROJECT : Research project consisting of photos, videos and installations

VIDEOS : LE MAGICIEN, 2020, <https://vimeo.com/420409739>
 PASSWORD : dés extinction 2020
 DAWIN'S FINCHES, 2020, <https://vimeo.com/420412535>
 PASSWORD : Voyage on the Beagle1839
 SOAP BUBBLE, 2020, <https://vimeo.com/420407887>
 PASSWORD : cycle 2020

PHOTO CREDIT : Exhibition views p. 19 : Mike Zenari







3,0.10₁₃

a mural tapestry as a research practice

The project is a 1% public commission for the National Health Laboratory, and was created while visiting different departments to see the work being undertaken behind the walls in this institution, which were then conveyed into a wall hanging carpet produced by skilled craftsmen in Bhadohi village near Varansi in Uttar Pradesh in India.

3,0.10₁₃ corresponds to the number of human cells for a man weighing 70 kg and measuring 170 cm. The pattern for this carpet was created using medical images from the National Health Laboratory's Gynecological Cytology, Cytogenetics and Hema-to-Oncogenetics Departments.

The wall hanging carpet is constituted of photographic documents produced within the laboratory itself, to use images intrinsically linked to the activities of the site. The carpet, which appears to be made up of abstract shapes, was composed from karyotypes*, images of double chromosomes not yet classified, FISH** analyses and cervico-uterine smear*** slides. Human cells and chromosomes can be identified. Disease and healthiness are treated on equal level.

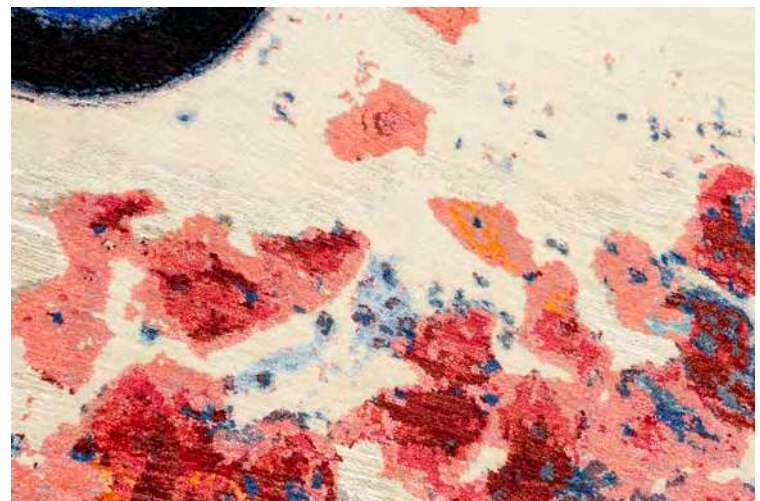


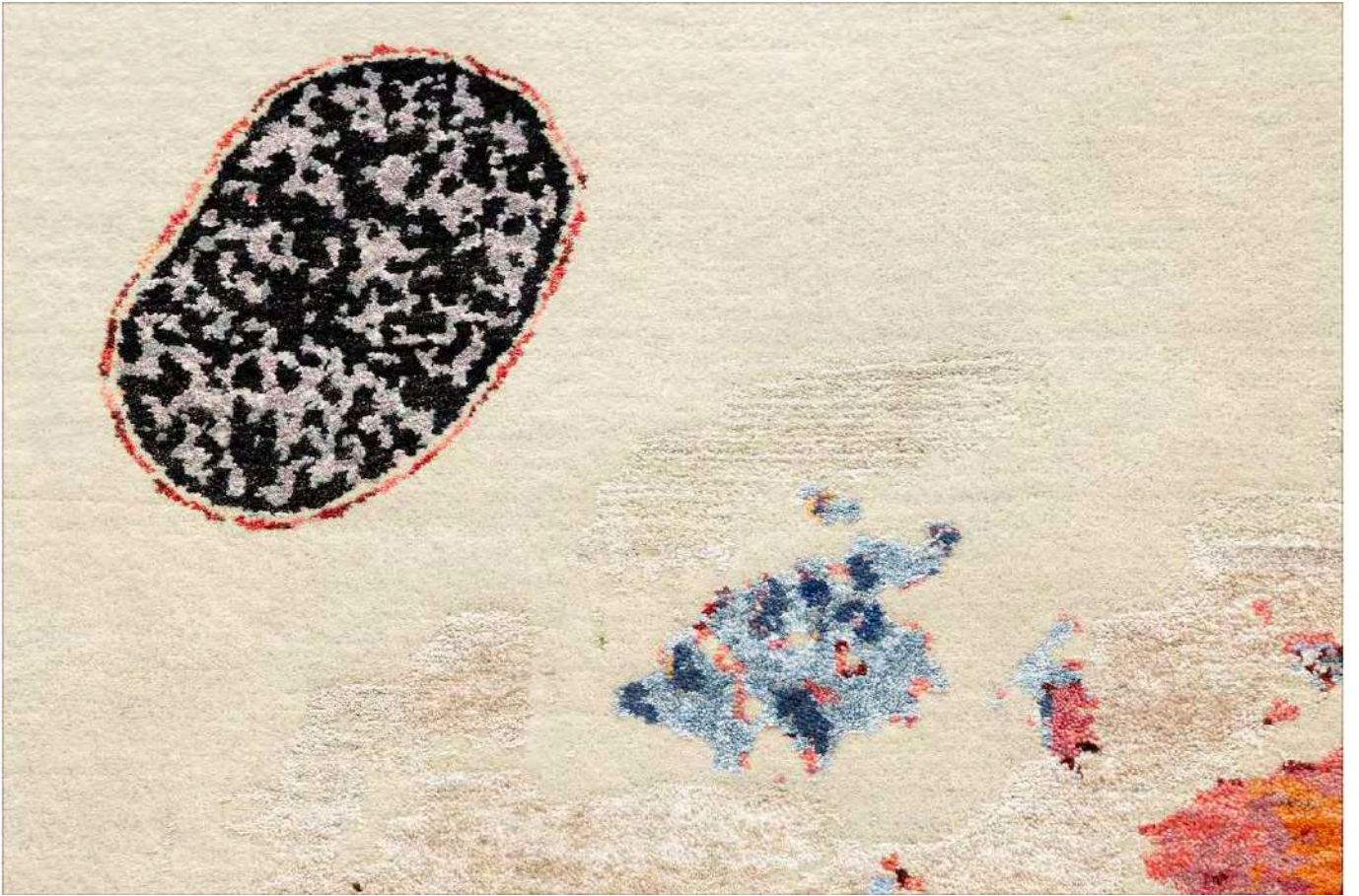
PROJECT : Public commission, 1%, Laboratoire national de Santé,
Luxembourg - Bâtiments publics

DATE : 2019

MEDIUM : Wall rug, wool, bamboo silk, linen, 500 cm x 380 cm

PHOTOS CREDITS : Patty Neu





BIOGRAPHY

Justine Blau is a visual artist, creating works that explore the various languages and usages of photography, particularly in a vernacular context. She is interested in the role culture plays in shaping an environment or people's interactions. Many of her works deal with the complex and peculiar relationship humankind maintains with what we qualify as "nature." She just finalised a film *Phusis* produced by the Film Fund in Luxembourg and is releasing a book *Veil of Nature* in fall 2023 with Berlin-based editor K.Verlag.

Blau studied at Wimbledon College of Art, University of the Arts London.

Her works and projects have been shown in Luxembourg and Europe, this includes :

- 2023 Résidence d'artiste, Fonderie Darling & Gare de Matapédia, Montréal & Gaspésie, Canada
- 2022 NEW MINETT (De terres rouges en terres rouges), Eddi van Tsui project, Korschthal, Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg
SÔMA, tombée de métier, Atelier Françoise Vernaudon & Cité internationale de la tapisserie, Aubusson, France
RE-RETOUR DE BABEL, Centres d'arts Nei Liicht & Dominique Lang, Dudelange
- 2021 JE SUIS UN MORCEAU DE PAYSAGE, Pavillon Esch 2022, Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg
RESSAC/RE, Waterwalls Festival, Esch-sur- Sûre, Luxembourg
- 2020 VIDA INERTE, phusei krupthestai philei, Nei Liicht, Dudelange, Luxembourg
Résidence d'artiste, Cité internationale des Arts, Paris, France
- 2019 EIN FENSTER INMITTEN DER WELT, Wolkenhof, Germany
3,0.10 13, commande 1%, Laboratoire national de santé, Dudelange, Luxembourg
- 2018 PAYSAGES RECOMPOSÉS, Prieuré du Pont-loup, Moret-sur Loing, France
Prix d'art Robert Schuman, Metz, France
- 2017 CORRIDOR 2, Pachamama , Insitu, Berlin, Germany
- 2016 LEAP Encouragement for artists prize, Rotondes, Luxembourg
- 2015 THE CIRCUMFERENCE OF THE CUMANÁN CACTUS, Cité de l'image, Clervaux
TOUS LES CHEMINS MÈNENT À SCHENGEN, Frac Lorraine, Metz, France
DON'T PANIC. This is a harmless exhibition, Cape, Ettelbruck, Luxembourg
- 2014 THE PROJECT, Galerie Bradtke, Luxembourg
SUBJECTIVE MAPS / DISAPPEARANCES, A Little Constellation Project, National Gallery of Iceland, Reykjavik, Iceland
- 2013 LOS PRIMEROS EMPRENDEDORES, Galerie Toutouchic, Metz, France
DistURBANces, - LandEscapes, MNHA, Luxembourg
LANDMARK : THE FIELDS OF PHOTOGRAPHY, Somerset House, Londres, UK
DistURBANces, MUSA, EMOP, Vienne
- 2013 TERRA COGNITA, Noorderlicht Festival, Museum Belvédère, Oranjewoud, The Netherlands