



ANIMA

INTERVIEW WITH NOÉMIE GOUDAL AND MAËLLE POÉSY

Born of the collaboration between a photographer and a writer and director, the *ANIMA* project is proudly multidisciplinary.

Maëlle Poésy: *ANIMA* is first and foremost a work of co-creation between Noémie Goudal and me, for which we invited two other artists to collaborate with us: performer Chloé Moglia and electronic music creator Chloé Thévenin. We conceived this project together, knowing that we would be writing together, and that I would be directing while Noémie would be in charge of the photography. The idea was to work at the border between several disciplines, to allow for a shared research, and finally to have four very distinct creative instincts come to life and complete one another. That's why it's important to us to call this work a performance rather than a show, as it sits at the crossroads between visual, photographic, musical, video, and scenic arts. We think of it more as a plastic experience. The spectators sit in a semi-circle in front of three screens on which are projected three long takes. Noémie Goudal's photographic research is what jumpstarted the whole project.

Could you tell us more about how *ANIMA* came to be?

Noémie Goudal: *ANIMA* is like a chapter born of a larger body of work called *Post-Atlantica*. It's made up mostly of series of photographs and videos showing sets that change over time to show how landscapes are transformed. *Post-Atlantica* is based on my interest in recent discoveries in the field of paleoclimatology, a contemporary science about the study of ancient climate. In this work, I'm trying to understand how scientists try to find concrete traces of the past to interpret the landscapes we know today. They reconstruct the various steps of the climate, the way a land once covered in ice changed, how the movement of tectonic plates split the continents apart, and the visible traces of those splits and junctions. My work is based on very concrete research, on scientific articles, in order to tackle more philosophical concepts. The history of sub-Saharan Africa as a green land jumpstarted our early research for *ANIMA*, for instance: the desert we know today used to be, a long time ago, a swamp full of water. That's also where we took the photographs of the Phoenix date palms one can see in *ANIMA*'s first part. To shoot the long takes we used for *ANIMA*, we filmed a set we built based on photographs of vegetal and mineral landscapes we printed out and then subjected to metamorphoses due to the various elements: fire, water, wind... It allows us to call to mind the idea of a landscape always in transition, of perpetual movement. What drives us is the question of how to transpose this relationship to time. That's why we created those very long takes. Some pieces from *Post-Atlantica* are also exhibited at the Rencontres de la photographie d'Arles, in the église des Trinitaires.

With *ANIMA*, the audience is immersed in a temporality they can experience physically...

N. G.: We're trying to make people feel the slowness of the changes that affect those places. Landscapes are made of layers of time, so the deeper you go, the further back in time you find yourself. Deep time theory allows us to retrace those metamorphoses, the movement of tectonic plates. Thanks to paleoclimatology, we've been able to find, in the 2000s, the traces of a tropical jungle under Antarctica. Under hundreds of metres of ice, they found plants that grew 52 million years ago at the Equator, and which became sediment to create a coal deposit! While this project could be understood as a reflection about the climate changes that worry us today, our vision is a more global one. It's really the history of the planet, the invisible ways in which it has changed territories, those millennia-long timelines, all that drives us. The temporality of the planet compared to that of the human race, which is like mere minutes. During our time on Earth, we don't have the time to feel it move, we have a relationship of stability when it comes to the land, symbolised by clear limits and pre-established borders. *ANIMA* is therefore an attempt to shift our perception, to feel the world as it intrinsically is, namely, in perpetual movement. Those filmed sets, which are built and taken apart in front of our eyes, are a way of approaching this cyclic and slow metamorphosis, and to bring movement back to those lands we see as immobile.

While working on our perception of movements but also of immobility, you decided to invite Chloé Moglia and Chloé Thévenin.

M. P.: When Chloé Moglia appears in a landscape, she moves through a space going through a process of deconstruction and questions, through her suspended posture, a sensation of both strength and fragility. Her personal work is often articulated between power and sensitivity, because she puts herself in danger by being suspended in the air. Her presence alone creates suspense, and she plays with our perception of time, which becomes distorted: she's the absolute present. That's what her putting herself in physical danger says! And the spectators start breathing with her. It's a very strong feeling of collective present. We even came to ask ourselves what the present was, and our answer, thanks to Chloé Moglia's presence, could be: an acute moment of feeling. The metamorphosis of the landscapes and Chloé's absolute present lead us to talk about the convergence of temporalities. A past which feeds the present which itself is part of the future. Moreover, like an added temporal layer, we can hear Chloé Thévenin's musical narration, based on real, organic, and physical material. Her work is very powerful. Her rhythms accompany and reveal emotions, create the perfect backdrop to welcome the spectators' sensibilities. Sound adds another key to understand the images, to offer a parallel discourse to the various other narratives.

Could you tell us more about how your collaboration came about? It might seem unexpected to an outside observer.

M. P.: Our artistic paths have crossed before, and we'd long wanted to work on a project together. The idea became concrete thanks to the exhibition Noémie Goudal is presenting at the Rencontres de la photographie d'Arles. We thought about how to show this photographic work by inventing a different framework for it. What we tried to create with this performance at the crossroads of many artistic practices is a sensory experience of deep time. The various stages of construction and of montage for the photographs shot for Arles inspired the process for the films used in *ANIMA*. When you stand in the studio and frame the photographs, before watching them change when exposed to fire, water, or wind, there's a very performative element to it. When photographs show first and foremost a result, the films used in *ANIMA* tell us of the process that leads to the final images.

N. G.: While the photographs of lush nature used in the films were shot in various places in the world, we're not particularly interested in locating or naming them precisely. What matters to us is to speak of those locations that call to mind universal notions such as the tropics, exoticism, etc. And what's fascinating is that with *ANIMA*, we all felt "shifted out of place." It's an artistic territory at once shared and open, with a lot of control but also of vulnerability.

Interview conducted by Moïra Dalant