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**Charlotte Moth**  
Selected press

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## Charlotte Moth by Jennifer Burris

*Infinite configurations: collection, space, and story.*



Charlotte Moth, Still from *In unexpected places, in unexpected lights and colours, (sculpture made to be filmed)*, 2012. Black-and-white digital video transferred from 16mm, silent, 3 min.

I met Charlotte Moth in August 2012 in Paris, where she lives and works. She was preparing for an isolated year in the residency of Schloss Solitude in Stuttgart following her first major solo exhibition, at the Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève, which had just closed. We spent the afternoon looking through images of the exhibition, which brought together photographs, sculptures, and films made since the beginning of her *Travelogue*, a collection of images of exterior and interior architectural spaces without chronological or geographical indicators that evolves via processes of accumulation and deferral. The exhibition also included two works by her frequent collaborators Falke Pisano and Peter Fillingham.

Having followed her practice since that first meeting, we reconnected earlier this year in the context of a screening program I organized at the Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam (SMBA) called "The Color of Capital." Immersing myself in her work in preparation for this event, I noticed for the first



time its profound resonance with the rise of object-oriented ontology in curatorial and artistic practice, an approach that investigates the “relation between persons and things while denying the hierarchical superiority of the human subject,” as described by Emily Apter. Without naming it as such, the following conversation excavates these ontologies in Moth’s work, focusing in particular on her most recent film *The story of a different thought*, which will be shown throughout this year at installations in The Temporary Gallery in Cologne, the Skulpturenmuseum Glaskasten in Marl, and De Vleeshal in Middelburg, and also screened alongside other of her films at the Centre Pompidou on September 25th as part of their Prospectif Cinéma series. In 2015, Moth will show a newly commissioned work in a solo exhibition at Tate Britain’s Archive Room.

**Jennifer Burris** After the screening of two of your films—*Study for a 16mm film* (2011) and *Study for a Travelogue in Motion* (2012)—at SMBA this past March, I was asked a couple of technical questions that I couldn’t fully answer. Perhaps the most straightforward of which was about your decision to shoot in 16mm before transferring to digital. Maybe this is a good place to start?

**Charlotte Moth** Well, to begin, I suppose it’s good to look at the first photo films that I made, which were composed of scanned photographs. Works such as *Maeve* and *Sadie*, both made in 2010, were developed from sending a box of selected images from my *Travelogue* to Sadie Murdoch and Maeve Connolly alongside a recording device. In effect, this resulted in two recordings, used in the films, of two people looking at the same set of photographs, but of course having two very different responses. The images came from 35mm negatives because in the *Travelogue*, for example, I never work with a digital camera—in part because I started off working with negatives, but also because of its connotation to the hard copy: the idea that there is a physical surface or imprint to the image. So when I started making films out of these photographs, I was already working in between analog and digital. It was just a very natural process.

*Study for a 16mm film*, on the other hand, was actually the first moving image work I made. I was interested in this format because it extended my previous process: 16mm film is made up of a series of single images. I was also very interested in the relationship to light, materiality, and color that I could achieve only with film. There is also this beautiful thing, similar to analog photography, which is that you don’t get to immediately see what you’ve done. There’s always a surprise. Things are overexposed. You take a risk. There is a delay between doing something and seeing something, and I really like to work with this kind of deferral.

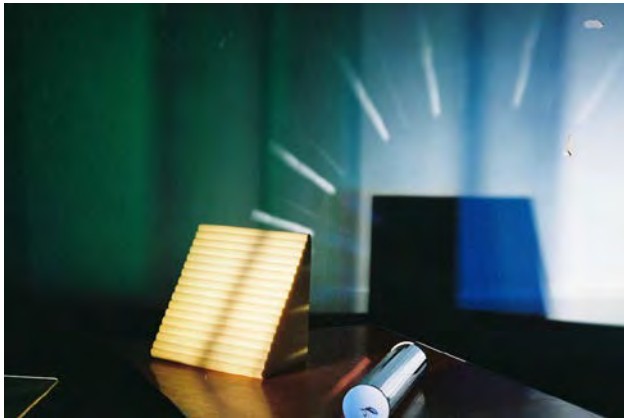
But I also really wanted an experience that was silent, without the sound of a projector going on in the background. This desire for silence is tied to the context in which the film was made. I was doing a residency in Porto at the Fundação de Serralves, and the space they had found for me to work in was previously a school for deaf children. Its curriculum was anti-gestural, which basically means that the children weren’t allowed to sign. They were made to speak. I think the school used quite harsh methods in order to achieve that. I spent three months in the presence of that history, thinking about silence and visual forms of communication. The name for the show at the end of the residency was *Visual Speech*.

**JB** And this is what compelled the transfer to digital?

**CM** It’s definitely one very strong part of the decision. I can also be quite critical of myself, and perhaps I was concerned about the aesthetic quality of the imagery. I didn’t want to deal with the aesthetics of the machinery that produced the image as well. So it was, in part, a result of natural transitions between analog and digital already in my work, but also an awareness of the asceticism and nostalgia that the medium can evoke.



Charlotte Moth, Stills from *Study for a 16mm film*, 2011. Color digital video transferred from 16mm film, silent, 11 min 28. Instituto Araujo, Porto, Serralves Foundation.



**JB** When you first arrived in Serralves, did you know that the space you would be working in was this former school or was the violence of that history something that unfolded over time?

**CM** I don't think I realized the extent of it—it takes time to reach an understanding of a place that you come to stay at. Porto is just so beautiful. It's right by the sea, so the light is incredible. I knew that they had found a space for me, and that it was a school, but it wasn't until I was there that the actual reality or atmosphere started to sink in. It's not like I planned to make a work that would be directly in response to that situation, but you're inevitably formed by a context.

**JB** Speaking of contexts, the first time we met you were about to go to Stuttgart for a residency at Akademie Schloss Solitude. How was that?

**CM** That name is not a euphemism. I did meet some really incredible people, and I think that's something that will stay with me. I met Joshua Edwards, who is a poet and writer from Texas. We went on a sixteen-kilometer walk, from castle to castle, talking and thinking about our approaches to working and how writing and the image are types of translation. We chatted about everything on that walk, it was wonderful for me and the beginning of a friendship with Josh resulting in many ideas we have not had the opportunity to develop yet. I also met Rebecca Loewen, who is a very talented architect from Winnipeg. There were many other great people as well. But I think Rebecca and Josh became the people whom I really wanted to develop projects with.



During this time, I was given a great opportunity from Die Kunstproduzenten, which is a new initiative set up by a nonprofit space in Cologne called The Temporary Gallery. Die Kunstproduzenten works with different partner institutions across Northern Europe to produce work in electronic form. I was the test artist for this, which was a great thing to be able to do, because you're also helping to define the project's boundaries. The first collaborating institution was the Skulpturenmuseum Glaskasten in Marl, about an hour and a half outside of Cologne. I naturally ended up wanting to make a new film after seeing this place, which became the site that triggered my twenty-eight-minute epic, *The story of a different thought*(2014).



Charlotte Moth, Still from *The story of a different thought*, 2014. 16mm footage digitally transferred, 35mm colour scanned negatives, digital photographs, digital steady cam footage, 28 min. The script includes conversations with architect Rebecca Loewen DIN projects, Winnipeg, Canada and poems by Joshua Edwards. Narration by Keith Collins and Caroline Hancock. Produced by Die Kunstproduzenten, Cologne.

**JB** This film seems to coalesce elements of your work that had previously remained physically apart, for example, a collection of essays presented alongside a silent film, both of which can also circulate independently from one another. I'm thinking in particular about Alice D. Peinado's text "Continuous Trajectories—Broken Utopias," which developed out of conversations she had with you in 2011. Reading this essay, which looks at notions of time and place in Ibiza, particularly in the context of Dada artist Raoul Hausmann's travels there during the 1930s, deeply informed how I understand your film *Study for a Travelogue in Motion*, as well as your *Travelogue* more broadly. This unfolding of meaning seems somehow condensed in your new work, where the relationships and influences are present in the film itself through voiceover narrative.

**CM** Pandora's box is the best way to describe this work. I am still digesting it. This also describes the museum in Marl, which is an incredible building. It was a very luxurious thing to be able to research a project for a year, and when you have that possibility it becomes more and more layered. Josh and Rebecca also contributed to the film's narrative. Marl is not far from Stuttgart, and since

**BOMB-Artists in conversation**

**04.09.2014**

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they were there at that time as well, they could also visit the building. At first, I asked Josh to think about what it would mean to write poems in relationship to a particular site. I also asked Rebecca to visit it with me, because, even before I had seen the building in Marl she had described another building on Lake Manitoba in Winnipeg that is built on sand. Located on the shoreline of the lake, its foundations are always shifting, never stable. The weather conditions are also incredibly volatile: there is a lot of flooding, heavy snow, and extreme heat. Responding to these conditions, the architectural firm where Rebecca works, DIN Projects, built a house called Twin Beaches that has floors that can be heightened if the water levels rise. Within this building you have all these concepts of instability, balance, suspension, and latency at work.



Still from *The story of a different thought*, 2014.

Learning about Twin Beaches, a building that I had never actually seen, made my first visit to Marl feel like a rediscovery, as the same principles of floating and suspension animate the design by the Dutch architects Jo van den Broek and Jaap Bakema. Therefore the municipal building, the Rathaus, created a natural link between Twin Beaches and resulted in conversations that were then elaborated further by intricate stories I discovered during my time in Marl—the collection of works inside the building, for example, which is incredible. It's a long story.

**JB** These architectural principles of floating and suspension that you are talking about also seem to inhabit the camera's perspective in the film, which glides over and under stairways.

**CM** It was the first time I was shooting in a digital format, so that feeling comes from being able to use a Steadicam. The film is a real collage. It's a prism almost, a multifaceted way of looking or un-looking. Scanned images from the *Travelogue* are incorporated as well. Thinking about surfacing in architecture and ideas of illusion, I was drawn to paper marbling and Renaissance architecture: the confluence of pictorial convention and an imitation of other surfaces. So that led me to Florence. There is a scene in the film where a man is putting colored pigment on a surface as he marbles paper, which is actually filmed in a workshop in Florence. It was shot on 16mm.



Still from *The story of a different thought*, 2014.

Rebecca was a great help. I wasn't able to visit Canada in time, so I asked her to take a lot of photographs of Twin Beaches. I asked her to shoot both the interior and exterior in 360 degrees, and then send these images to me with a description. These conversations, both visual and textual, all somehow ended up in the film.

**JB** From how you've described Twin Beaches, it sounds very much like an architectural solution to a specific geography of instability, whereas the construction of the building in Marl seems more ideological. Is that contrast intentional?

**CM** There is a contrast. Architects were testing a lot of new construction technologies in the 1950s, which is when the Rathaus was built. For example, it was the first building that used concrete suspension columns. But obviously, there's a risk when trying out new techniques, an element of the unknown is inherently involved. Concrete has a lifespan. There are huge problems with the hanging towers crumbling, and they've had to reinforce them from the inside and that process cost the town a lot of money. But going back to your question, the flotation system and roof structure of the lower-lying building did have to do with geographical conditions in Marl. There's a lot of coal mining in the area, and I think the architecture was in part a response to the instability of the earth that it's sitting on. Maybe it has to do with having to spread the load. But it's fascinating to see the flexibility of these concepts, particularly in their ideological relationship to modernism, because in a practical way Rebecca and Neil obviously made a building that directly responds to the needs of a specific physical place. Whereas van den Broek and Bakema were also responding to the direct needs of a project prescribed by the community of the small town that commissioned it.



**JB** There are different ways of thinking about how a building responds to its environment, be it social or political or geographic.

**CM** There is one comment that van den Broek and Bakema made about wanting their building to have as multifunctional and flexible a usage as possible, an attempt to respond to the demands of the community that made the project happen. But when something is too broad, it can also get lost. I learned a lot from talking with Rebecca about this, and how it intersects with structuralism in architecture.

**JB** I remember something you said when we first met, which is that your projects often evolve from conversation, be it with a specific person, history, or locality. I see this dialogue in your work with Hausmann's archives, which chronicles his travels through Ibiza, and also in the work you made in Marfa, *Sculpture made to be filmed* (2012), which is in conversation with both Donald Judd and the Texas landscape. How did you arrive at this process of developing work through conversation?

**CM** A lot of it has to do with the thinking process. I'm also working with this in the *Travelogue*, which is like a reserve. It's about when things are put into action in a certain context. A conversation is a process of thinking; thoughts are being constructed as we speak. So it's about these infinite configurations or possibilities that a conversation might take.

The sculpture I made in Marfa during my residency there echoes this process. It's six units, or boxes, and I worked with a lighting engineer to construct a system of permutations where every unit has a different rhythm. If you looked at it for a month, you would never see patterns of the entire sculpture repeat. It is as close to infinite as I could possibly imagine in a sculpture.

**JB** Why did you start the *Travelogue*?

**CM** It was when I was a student in Canterbury, in response to a series of buildings that I became fascinated with. I was starting to make sculptures, which were direct copies of certain features or aspects of buildings that had this very imaginative side to them. There was a window at the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill on Sea, for example, which probably looked like a window you could find in many places because it wasn't very Mendelsohn-like—the 1935 building was designed by architects Erich Mendelsohn and Serge Chermayeff—but I added a certain backspace or depth to it, which made it quite playful. Another interesting piece of architecture was a space that used to be a disco, and outside there was a window with a mirror sectioned to it, so you had this doubling of the image in a sense. A piece of work I made about this copying was my very first consideration of architectural space.

**JB** Is your interest in illusion or surface rooted in this confluence of windows and mirrors?

**CM** It's a continuing system of deferral, I suppose, which functions in many different ways. As I was saying, you come back to the same image but treat it in a different way. It's again this sense of the different possibilities or different lives of something, and it is quite interesting to think about how that functions within a work.

**JB** In an interview with Florence Ostende, you mentioned that you think of the *Travelogue* as a collection rather than an archive: "An archive categorizes something and fixes it in relation to a specific meaning. The images in the *Travelogue* are an ever-growing configuration that shifts in my mind as ideas do: one image informs the other so it's quite unexpected and very much a speculative





activity. A collection grows organically; it's a very practical type of knowledge. Think of André Malraux's *Musée Imaginaire*, Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*, or Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*. There are many many links inherently woven into this system of collecting, ordering or categorizing. I think of it as a cumulus cloud that's drifting, snowballing in size that enables ideas to travel great distances and be put in new contexts." Why is this distinction between archive and collection so important to draw?

**CM** It really has to do with questioning the nature of what an archive is. An archive asserts a certain truth of something; it professes an authority on what that thing is in a sense.



Still from *The story of a different thought*, 2014.

**JB** Even if that truth is radical or counter-hegemonic, it's still a specific perspective.

**CM** Yes, for sure. I was very interested in *not* making a particular statement about an image, which is why I say it's more like a reserve waiting to be put into action or waiting for a statement to arise. These images have a possibility of shape shifting.

**JB** There is no "objective" categorization with meta-data and subcategories.

**CM** Because then you get lost in the whole system of process and differentiation, which is a bit limiting in a way.

**JB** Your resistance to categorization is interesting because so many of the images in your collection are fragments of modernist architecture, which, to me, evokes an intense desire for a Western model of rationality—a very specific, programmatic idea of how one should live translated into three-dimensional space.



**CM** Well, the building in Marl is truly a modernist architecture, but a lot of the other images are hybrids. They're mixtures trying to be something; there's a lot of copying. But then again, the idea of modernism itself is quite a heavy word, no? The *Travelogue* is really about how there's another way of looking at these specific things that you can't really place. Again, I suppose that's where it comes down to being a collection and not an archive. But at the same time, I'm now making a work on this very high modernist building that almost nobody knows about, which is quite strange because van der Broek and Bakema are really important architects.



Still from *The story of a different thought*, 2014

**JB** I had never heard of them before seeing your film.

**CM** That's also very interesting about history, no? How certain things survive and other things are forgotten or have these moments of reoccurring. *The story of a different thought* looks at how a building just completed by a young architectural firm in Winnipeg could relate to that conversation or history as well. Twin Beaches isn't even completely finished, actually, so it almost looks like a ruin in some of the photos Rebecca sent me.

**JB** Like Robert Smithson's *Hotel Palenque* (1969-72)?

**CM** Definitely. That's a very important work for me. There is an entropic Smithson moment in there.

**JB** You are currently working on a project for Tate Britain's Archive Room. How do you reconcile this context with the distance toward archives you feel in your own work?

**CM** Over the last year, I was working in the Archive Room and discovered Barbara Hepworth's sculptural notes and documentation starting in the 1930s up until the '70s. I became very intrigued with this set of images, one in particular. It's in her London studio, photographed before World War II, of a sculpture called *One Form (single form) 1937*. There's this white curtain behind the sculpture



that seems to be reverberating or resonating, like it's not keeping still. You have this completely blurred backdrop with a sculpture that is quite crisp in front of it.

**JB** So the first time this sculpture was visible to the outside world was through this photograph?

**CM** Exactly, but I think it was more for her own documentation. But then her studio was bombed during the war, and the sculpture was destroyed. Looking into these records further, I just became more and more intrigued by how she was employing the image to record her sculptures. Other images have a kind of cloud background, so the sculptures almost seem to be levitating in the sky. And then there are other images where her sculptures sit next to a tropical-looking houseplant. What kind of decision was behind that? In another one the shadows of leaves sort of creep into the top left-hand corner, which creates this strange sort of decontextualization of the sculpture. I just became fascinated with these images, which tie back to my fascination with Brancusi's studio: an obvious example of the construction of the sculpture photograph. I think these discoveries will probably be the basis of my work for the Archive Room, but it's early yet and I still need to visit Hepworth's studio in St. Ives, where she moved after the war.

**JB** Speaking of destruction, or bombing, when I first saw your work it made me think of Antonioni's *Zabriskie Point* (1970)—particularly if you were to strip the movie's narrative, leaving just the atmosphere and feeling and mood. Do you think about film or intentionally engage with certain cinematic histories when making your work?

**CM** It's funny that you should say that because, the other day, I went for a walk with a friend who was showing me parts of Paris that I hadn't seen before. We were walking up the street and I saw these strange buildings that felt like they were from the desert, and we both thought that they looked like something out of *Zabriskie Point*.

I recently went through a serious Cassavetes phase. *Shadows* (1959) and *Faces* (1968) are extraordinary films. With *Shadows*, I also like that it doesn't technically have a script. The film was made up as he went along, working with actors who aren't really actors; a construction that functions like the *Travelogue* in a way. I also love the Indian filmmaker Satyajit Ray. There is one very beautiful film of his called *The Music Room* (1958). I love the beginning of it. It's strongly atmospheric; from the void, this blackness, a chandelier comes swinging and gets bigger and bigger and bigger. There's also a moment when he films a dancer with a really long shot, allowing the attention of the viewer to stay with her movements. Just letting vision rest and the shot continue for quite awhile.

*Charlotte Moth's exhibition at the Skulpturenmuseum Glaskasten Marl opens September 8, 2014. See her Kunstproduzenten production grant here.*

*Jennifer Burris is a writer and curator based in Mexico City. She has a PhD from the University of Cambridge and was previously the 2011-13 Whitney-Lauder Curatorial Fellow at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia.*

<http://bombmagazine.org/article/1000206/charlotte-moth>



## ARTFORUM

### Charlotte Moth

MARCELLE ALIX

4 rue Jouye-Rouve

September 13–November 3

Charlotte Moth's photographs and films emphasize the complex relationship between these media and their subject matters. For Moth—who often shoots her own sculptures, assemblages, and staged events and habitually conducts extensive research before setting her camera in a particular location—content and methodology are as much the medium as a digital or analog capture.

The titles of the two films on view underscore Moth's elastic understanding of what constitutes a "final" artwork. The subject of *In Unexpected Places, in Unexpected Lights and Colours (a Sculpture Made to be Filmed)* (all works 2012) is a large wooden crate adorned with colored lightbulbs—in fact a sculpture that Moth has previously exhibited under the title *Sculpture made to be filmed*. In the film, Moth captures the structure spinning amid a flat Texan landscape in moody, emphatically cinematic black and white. In *Study for a 16mm film*, 2011, various geometric objects cast mesmerizing shadows and reflections as they appear to wobble and whirl across a tabletop. Technically a digitally transferred 16-mm film, this work also includes a curated collection, a kinetic sculpture, and a performance.



Charlotte Moth, *Study for a 16mm film*, 2011, 16 mm, color, 11 minutes 28 seconds.

Moth's two large-format photographs comment on photography's documentary role—specifically in relation to architecture and sculpture. In the simplest terms, *Willa Niespodzianka* is a photo of a photo. Moth still-mounted her own print of a Polish modernist house, placed it in the landscape in front of the actual house, and documented the installation. The multilayered, self-referential result raises issues of authorship and authenticity. The other photograph (titled *...this was the plane—the variously large and accentuated, but always exactly determined plane—from which everything would be made...*, 2012) is a more straightforward illustration of the inherent subjectivity of defining and exposing a final artwork: In it, Moth directs our gaze to a solitary empty stone plinth in Paris's Parc des Buttes Chaumont.

— Mara Hoberman

PAROLES D'ARTISTE **CHARLOTTE MOTH**

## « L'idée d'interdisciplinarité est importante pour moi »

□ Avec un dispositif radical – un filtre bleu couvre la vitrine de la galerie Marcelle Alix, à Paris, à l'intérieur de laquelle sont accrochées deux photos noir et blanc et projetés deux films au sous-sol –, Charlotte Moth élabore des images avec une démarche interdisciplinaire.

CHARLOTTE MOTH. VILLA SURPRISE, jusqu'au 3 novembre, Galerie Marcelle Alix, 4, rue Jouye-Rouve, 75019 Paris, tél. 09 50 04 16 80, [www.marcellealix.com](http://www.marcellealix.com), mercredi-samedi 14h-19h

À la fois dans le dispositif de votre exposition et dans vos œuvres elles-mêmes, souhaitez-vous établir un lien entre photographie, cinéma et sculpture ? Ce lien est-il nécessaire afin de produire des images ?

deux. Évidemment je ne suis pas réalisatrice de cinéma, j'ai étudié la sculpture à l'école d'art. Pour moi la relation entre l'image et la sculpture est une position importante à étudier et discuter, et je crois que tout cela contribue à établir un lien entre les objets



de l'exposition de Charlotte Moth, Villa Surprise, galerie Marcelle Alix, Paris, 2012. © Photo : Aurélien Viret

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L'idée de créer une scène est pour moi fondamentale, ce qui m'a donc conduite à reconfigurer la galerie de manière à ce que vous soyez presque immergé dans cet environnement organisé, mis en scène grâce à ce filtre bleu sur la vitrine. L'autre chose est l'idée d'objet, comme dans le cinéma où vous pouvez voir des objets utilisés dans les films par exemple. Or dans les deux films projetés ici, *Study for a 16 mm Film* et *In Unexpected Places, in Unexpected Lights and Colours (a Sculpture Made to be Filmed)*, j'étudie la relation entre la sculpture et des objets, ce qui établit des parallèles entre les

deux. Évidemment je ne suis pas réalisatrice de cinéma, j'ai étudié la sculpture à l'école d'art. Pour moi la relation entre l'image et la sculpture est une position importante à étudier et discuter, et je crois que tout cela contribue à établir un lien entre les objets et la sculpture, l'architecture, l'image. L'idée d'interdisciplinarité est importante car pour moi le plus intéressant est cette hybridation ou ce mouvement entre différents médias et un langage ou un vocabulaire visuel qui peuvent se mettre en place progressivement.

**Vous intéressez-vous précisément à la question de produire des images ?**

Ce qui m'intéresse c'est de faire des œuvres, mais évidemment si vous parlez d'interdisciplinarité cela prend plusieurs formes. Par exemple, mon vaste projet



*Travelogue* est une ancienne recherche qui s'est traduite par la production d'images ; mais l'expérience d'être dans un endroit à un moment précis où j'ai pris la photo est peut-être aussi importante que l'image elle-même. Il y a un acte et une réaction. Je dirais que l'image est un produit de cela, je n'envisage pas seulement la question de faire une image.

**Vous parlez d'hybridation. Comment l'envisagez-vous précisément ?**

Il y a dans l'exposition une photo intitulée *Willa Niespodzianka* (Villa Surprise, 2012), qui vient



Je suis très intéressée par le potentiel de changement d'un objet

d'une invitation à Otwock, à 20 minutes environ de Varsovie. Il y a là une sorte de cité-jardin établie dans les années 1920 avec une incroyable série de maisons. Je voulais développer un travail en relation avec une maison et j'ai fait un objet, une bannière avec une photo figurant cette maison avant qu'elle ne soit démolie que j'ai installée en face du site de l'édifice détruit ; il s'agit donc d'une image à l'intérieur d'une image. Peut-être est-ce un bon exemple si vous voulez parler d'hybridation, car cela amène conjointement cette idée d'une intervention dans l'espace et

d'une manière de travailler qui était une façon de réagir à une situation et un lieu, qui tous deux modifient l'environnement car la maison a disparu. L'autre photo figure un socle vide dans le parc des Buttes-Chaumont, à Paris. Il m'a beaucoup intéressée en tant que forme car j'ai fait beaucoup de recherches sur Brancusi tout en m'interrogeant sur l'usage des socles dans la sculpture.

**Votre film *Study for a 16 mm Film* (2012) montre une succession d'objets. Était-ce une manière de constituer une documentation ou une archive à propos de ces objets que vous avez mis en scène ?**

Pas vraiment, car je pense qu'une archive positionne véritablement quelque chose de manière très stricte et spécifique ; c'est comme lui donner une étiquette. Or je suis très intéressée par le potentiel de changement que peut avoir un objet. L'important est d'observer ces objets que j'aime et de leur donner une condition en observant leur matérialité, leur relation avec l'espace, comment la lumière change les choses ou comment la couleur affecte la manière dont vous les voyez. Je n'avais jamais travaillé avec l'image en mouvement auparavant, et ce film est fait avec une série d'images fixes qui constituent une image en mouvement. De plus ce film est très statique même s'il bouge. Il y a donc là encore une relation intéressante entre film, photographie et sculpture.

**Propos recueillis par Frédéric Bonnet**



# L'ATEMPORALITÉ NOUVELLE

PAR JULIE PORTIER

Charlotte Moth est de cette génération dont les aînées ont accusé la fin des récits linéaires, ceux de l'histoire de l'art en particulier, dans un réengagement critique des formes et des concepts du passé. Ce moment de l'après-après coup est dans cette œuvre prometteuse, d'une délicatesse intelligente, d'une « grâce pudique », selon les mots de la commissaire, Émilie Bujès, celui d'un regain esthétique, formel et poétique, faisant usage des vieilles marmites comme des chaudrons magiques pour créer quelque chose de nouveau. Empruntant son titre à un Roland Barthes égaré dans l'impasse créatrice et la nostalgie d'une littérature obsolète, « Ce qui est fragile est toujours nouveau », première exposition monographique de l'artiste britannique installée à Paris, déploie, au Centre d'art contemporain de Genève, les articulations sensibles de cette complète recherche (enquête, archéologie, expérience) artistique. Formée à la sculpture, Moth s'engage dans une entreprise photographique, parcourant les villes balnéaires anglaises, puis le monde, armée de son appareil photo argentique pour constituer son *Travelogue*, banque d'images fixées dans l'éternité, recensement d'architectures modernistes, de façades vernaculaires ou d'objets trouvés. Cette collecte est remise en œuvre, comme dans l'installation *Images for Maeve Connolly and Sadie Murdoch*, où un cadre évoquant l'agencement de la photographie « pauvre » dans l'art conceptuel est assorti de deux films – sur des moniteurs datés –, fruits de la collaboration (presque systématique chez Moth) avec l'auteure et l'artiste à qui Moth a confié ces photographies afin qu'elles y projettent leurs imaginaires. L'image neutre devient icône dans l'exercice de l'interprétation. Aussi, dans un espace-temps rendu indécis par le montage « discrédant » (une invention lettriste), l'œuvre réinvestit l'écart – l'abîme – entre le texte et l'image, mettant encore en doute le fait que la photographie puisse donner la preuve du réel. C'est sur le même terrain d'investigation que se situe *Noting Thoughts*, inspiré des archives de Raoul Hausmann dont Moth suit la trace sur l'île d'Ibiza. Se réappropriant le format de la table documentaire (conceptuelle encore), à laquelle elle donne du relief et de la couleur, l'artiste confronte les photographies prises sur l'île et le texte d'une anthropologue évoquant le regard du dadaïste sur ces lieux qu'il estime hors de la civilisation, oubliés du progrès.

Virtuose dans sa poétique du discordant, Charlotte Moth génère de nouvelles formes en procédant au collage (originaire du cubisme et du Surréalisme) de techniques et de références anciennes. Ainsi de *Untitled (Figtree)*, tirage argentique éclairé par une diapositive monochrome, comme un ancêtre « système D » du caisson lumineux. Cette réinterprétation de formes connues par des moyens



Vue de l'exposition de Charlotte Moth « Ce qui est fragile est toujours nouveau », Centre d'art contemporain de Genève. © Centre d'Art Contemporain de Genève. Photo : David Gagnebin-de Bons.

rudimentaires se retrouve dans *Sculpture made to be filmed* créée à Marfa (la terre de Donald Judd), sculpture-architecture de caissons en bois dans lesquels clignotent des ampoules colorées, aux confins du minimalisme et de la fête foraine. Ici, elle éclaire une série de photographies ; là, elle est le personnage principal d'un film noir et blanc tourné au milieu du désert texan (*In unexpected places, in unexpected light and colours*). Ces multiples réemplois d'images au sein même de l'œuvre font moins la preuve de la disponibilité de toute forme à sa réappropriation, qu'elles suggèrent un effet de réminiscence caractéristique d'un certain rapport à l'histoire, un héritage visuel inconscient : « *des choses que je ne connais pas et dont je me souviens pourtant* », dit le film *The Absent Forms*. Une poésie nouvelle – là où Barthes a découvert le haïku – qui soulève son matériau (véridique, fonctionnel, rationnel) hors du temps et du réel. ■

CHARLOTTE MOTH, « CE QUI EST FRAGILE EST TOUJOURS NOUVEAU », ET « COMING SOON » (PROPOSITION D'ANTHONY HUBERMAN), jusqu'au 12 août, Centre d'art contemporain de Genève, 10, rue des Vieux-Grenadiers, Genève, Suisse, tél. +41 22 329 18 86, [www.centre.ch](http://www.centre.ch)



## Charlotte Moth

05.09.11



View of "Noting Thoughts," 2011.

Since 1999, the Paris-based artist Charlotte Moth has worked on the *Travelogue*, a collection of photographs that she constantly updates. Her discovery of pictures that were taken by Raoul Hausmann in Ibiza in the 1930s became the basis of her exhibition "Noting Thoughts," which is on view at the Musée Départemental d'Art Contemporain de Rochechouart until May 29.

**I'M VERY INTERESTED IN A SCULPTURAL RELATIONSHIP TO EXPERIENCE.** An image can later function as an aid to memory, it becomes a hybrid, and something perhaps better described as an "image-memory." When I was in art school I was taking a lot of photographs, and for me that acted as a way of studying things, trying to learn what was around me. I was absolutely fascinated by the structural forms of architecture—all types—and using it as a way to think about how to generate work. This habit of taking photographs became very accumulative and naturally charted a kind of itinerancy or movement in space and place.

I really wanted to develop a relationship between research and looking, where research becomes work and work becomes research. So for me the photographs in the *Travelogue* are very structurally grounded in research. And this led to traveling to Paris, Marseille, London, Los Angeles, Kyoto, Hamburg, Maastricht, and Brussels, to name a few. The more you travel, the more you discover, and the more you read the more you want to travel.

For my show in Rochechouart, I really wanted to make a transition in space and time by using these tables to lay my photos on; they create a sort of horizon in the space. You're walking around them and they become islands. You could read the layout as a narrative, but it's very segmented—more like a three-dimensional book, as the images are mounted on folded metal sheets.

This year is the twenty-fifth anniversary of the museum's collection, and to mark it the institution invited two artists to produce a site-specific work that dealt with ideas of collection and archiving. I was very pleased to be chosen, and I decided to look at the archive of the Dada artist Raoul Hausmann, as it's very special and the largest collection of his work. It includes all his photographs, even all his ties—Mr. Hausmann had a cravat fetish. But it has many of his writings and poetry too. I was kind of overwhelmed by these things in a very lovely way. Even though he was quite political, he was also a dancer, a poet, and a painter. So this archive is extensive.

I was particularly interested in the images from his stay in Ibiza from 1933 to 1936. To him, creating photographs was more like a making an anthropological survey of the island—it wasn't just buildings that he liked; he was also taking pictures of people, landscapes, houses, plants, all this kind of stuff. Perhaps he was looking for an untouched land. When I went to Ibiza, I was surprised to feel like I had already been there, that I had ideas of what the land would be like, perhaps from looking through his archive. And the ironic thing, which isn't really ironic at all, is that when I arrived in Ibiza for the first time I felt like I had already photographed it.

— As told to Sherman Sam



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## Meet the best new artists in Britain

We asked Richard Wentworth, Tacita Dean, Yinka Shonibare and Cornelia Parker to choose the young artist they find most promising – and tell us why

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Kate Kellaway, Lizzy Davies, Inogen Carter  
The Observer, Sunday 17 October 2010

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Charlotte Moth, 31, in front of her work 'Behind every surface there is a mystery: a hand that might emerge... version 3, 2010', Paris. Photograph: Ed Alcock for the Observer Ed Alcock/Observer

### **CHARLOTTE MOTH chosen by TACITA DEAN**

'Her work feels like she's travelling, noticing and absorbing, and is not, for the time being, studio-bound or stuck to a particular place or orthodoxy,' says [Tacita Dean](#) of her chosen artist, Charlotte Moth, before praising her "eclectic use of materials" and "delicacy of touch".

Charlotte Moth's art has taken her all over Europe, but it was in her hometown, Bexhill-on-Sea, as a teenager that she had her first shiver of inspiration: walking past the De La Warr pavilion every Saturday on her way to work, she noted with curiosity the white Modernist hulk amid the old-world grandeur of the seaside resort.

Sixteen years on and Moth, 31, is still fascinated by the shapes and spaces around her, from apartment blocks to empty streets to striking interiors, but is now an established artist who draws on these photographic subjects as a sculptor draws on their material. She avoids



restricting herself to one discipline – "I always had a problem at art school because they made you choose departments" – and her work takes in photography, sculpture and, occasionally, film, theatre and music: an exploration of space in all its aspects.

Moth shares with Dean an interest in analogue – *Travelogue*, her ever-growing collection of photographs of spaces such as hotel lobbies, seaside resorts and deserted offices is shot entirely on film – and an affection for continental Europe: Dean left Britain for Berlin in 2000, Slade graduate Moth has lived in Paris, "on and off" for the past four years. "It's this idea of displacement that's really important," she says. "When you're removed from something, then maybe you can look at it in a different way."

In Paris Most recently, Moth has been working on installations of a "sculptural dialogue" between two works – the one a shimmering curtain, the second a slide show behind the curtain. She also continues to add to *Travelogue*, in which images are stripped of all context: "Someone who comes to see [them] might not have been at the De La Warr Pavilion but they might have been to a lido in Cornwall, for example, or some exotic place that feels the same. The sense of ambiguity is important because there are many readings an image can trigger." **LD**