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French Pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale

Artsy Editorial

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“rêvolutions”

Artist: Céleste Boursier-Mougenot

Curator: Emma Lavigne

Commissioner: Institut français, with Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication

Venue: Pavilion at Giardini

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Céleste Boursier-Mougenot
transHumUs / projet révolutions (Installation View), 2015
56th Venice Biennale

In his 2010 installation at the Barbican in London, Céleste Boursier-Mougenot released a small flock of zebra finches into a gallery equipped with carefully tuned and amplified electric guitars. As the birds perched and preened, their movements created an unpredictable soundscape, enveloping guests as they walked through the semi-organic gallery ecosystem. Describing the installation, Boursier-Mougenot explained in an interview, “I am not using the birds, I am collaborating with them” in creating the dreamlike experience.

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Céleste Boursier-Mougenot
from here to ear (v.15), 2011
56th Venice Biennale

Céleste Boursier-Mougenot
from here to ear (v.15), 2011
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Boursier-Mougenot’s work frequently uses technological intervention to create multisensory environments, bringing the viewer into direct contact with an experiential world that the artist describes as a “phenomenon, like a living organism, indissociable from the conditions of its emergence and the circumstances of the present.” His project at the French Pavilion of this year’s Venice Biennale, titled “rêvolutions,” exists squarely in this tradition.

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Céleste Boursier-Mougenot
sans titre, 2011
56th Venice Biennale

Céleste Boursier-Mougenot
averses, 2014
56th Venice Biennale

Visitors are guided into and through the space by three uncanny, quivering artificial trees, which form larger patterns of choreographed movement and generate their own droning sound. Design elements and furnishings within the pavilion offer variable reference points for spectators, and the structure itself is partially slathered in an artificial foam, designed for a previous series, that flows and expands in response to the sounds of the installation.

Through this interplay between artifice and organic form, the installation is transformed into a surreal ecosystem of poetry and science.

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