

# GALLERIA CONTINUA / Les Moulins

SOPHIE WHETTNALL

*Femme sans ombre. Hommage à Shirin Malek-Mansour*

Opening : Saturday 26 of October

From October 26 to December 22, 2013

GALLERIA CONTINUA / Les Moulins is pleased to present a solo exhibition by Sophie Whettnall, *Femme sans ombre. Hommage à Shirin Malek-Mansour*.

Commenting on her film *Shadow Boxing*, a video that presents the relationships of implicit violence between a man and a woman in a boxing gym, Robert Storr concluded his review by saying, "simple things are often best."

Born in Brussels in 1973, Sophie Whettnall works in video, photography, installations, and performance. Her work deals with the intimate and the relationship of women to outdoor space, the visible and the secret, and presence and emptiness. The shift from one state to another—from dependence to insubordination—weaves itself throughout her work. The problematics of duality and alterity enable her to put these notions into action.

Winner of the prestigious *Prix de la Jeune Peinture belge* in 1999, Sophie Whettnall exhibits her work internationally. In 2005, she covered the exhibition space of the Casa Velasquez in Madrid with red snow. She was chosen by Daniel Buren to take part in *L'Emprise du lieu* at the Domaine Pommery in 2007. That same year, Whettnall showed at the 52<sup>nd</sup> Venice Biennale, curated by Robert Storr, as well as at the CGAG in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. In 2012, the Joan Miró Foundation held a solo exhibition of her work and her videos were shown at the Belgian pavilion of the Shanghai World Expo.

The works exhibited at Le Moulin this fall are of an enlightened sobriety, and the artist refocuses her visual language through this economy.

Twelve sculptures erected in the gallery's industrial rooms are surrounded by wooden panels painted in black ink. In the room next door, a triptych projection shows a procession of women in a verdant landscape.

An assemblage of wooden planks as thin as leaves of white paper constitute the work *Femme sans ombre* (« Woman without a Shadow »), after the eponymous opera by Richard Strauss. The panels are placed on the ground and against the walls, elementary and resonant with the raw space of Le Moulin. The pictorial research into shadow and light leads to abstraction.

Landscapes, portraits—the artist works here on a lost, or essentialized, identity, painting the twin silhouette of an absence in black ink, reducing a world into vibrant black spots whose repetition invokes a state of meditative contemplation.

In the same room are *Les Porteuses* (« The Carriers »), baskets in various forms perched on slender wooden and metal bases that create elegant silhouettes of African women in a hieratic monochrome.

In their silent march, the base becomes a pedestal, and the basket a metonymy for the world whose weight is borne by the carrier.

The video features Burkinabés parading in a sea of tall grass. Projected on three screens that encompass three times in the procession, the film depicts the humanity of a simple, atemporal ritual action.

Nature in space, formal gestures, and the sketch created by the wood—a loop of invariant stories like the origin of worlds.

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