

SENSITIVE MEMORIES !

exhibition by **Milène Guermont**
at the **National Archives of France**
from May 31 to July 8, 2012



PLANET 488#C in the Soubise hotel for *SENSITIVE MEMORIES !*
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INTRODUCTION

by Émilie Bouvard, art historian and critic.

Memory and material

In Physics, we speak about the “memory of the material,” of the “alloys shaped by memory”. It is a metaphor: how can concrete, this composite, this alloy, have memory? These are inert materials, lifeless, soulless, without feeling ... and what would be the sense? If a memory lodges itself in the folds and creases of the “grey matter” of the brain, or in the flashes of the nervous system, it cannot be established, in the sense that we understand it, in that which is mineral. Indeed, we speak of the memory of materials in the sense that they are capable of recalling an ancient form or keeping a new form. They have no true history, because that would imply a conscience and a narrative, however minimal. Even in a general way, as shown in Bergson’s *Matter and Memory* of 1896, as memory requires a material substrate, like life or thought of which it is but a synonym, it cannot then be understood as a thing. This is the perennial problem of the relationship between mind and body, from Descartes to Bergson and in the cognitive sciences.

Yet some materials record human memory - its history - in a way that tends to make us forget that they are only ink and paper, parchment, magnetic recording tape, or something else: these are the foundations of archives. The singular nature of their content, and sometimes their shape, acting like ancient documents, manuscripts, or modern documents, having been put into a particular form, at least awakens our sensitivity and intelligence when they are read - as in front of unique individuals. For man/people they are not strictly equal to the sum of what they tell us, even after exhaustive study of everything about them. Their value is not purely informative, it is also emotional: they are the material of our collective memory. They have a legitimate existence as objects, they are tangible evidence that 'this has been', they are an actual and real presence of the past, they travel through time, they form our patrimony.

The concrete of Milène Guermont affects us like archival papers, but also in other ways, using our experiences and our sensory and aesthetic memory (in the etymological sense). For a number of years this singular artist has developed complex technological processes to animate this inanimate material – the mineral kingdom. Using sensors that trigger sounds or vibrations, embedding optical fibers that create light in this inert material, refining the material as a skin or forcing it into random forms, her work evokes emotion in that from which it should be absent. Therefore, the concrete becomes a kind of memory of sounds, tactile sensations, images, capable of reacting to stimuli from spectators’ bodies, and in turn inspiring their own associations and memories. It awakens the memory of the body, stimulates the mind, and plays on our synesthetic abilities. Here are the “correspondances” of Baudelaire: if this rustling, quivering concrete can cause me to dream of the sea, it is because I remember the hard, wet smash of water which then withdraws, taking with it the sand from the beach.

Our collective sensitivity is memorial and spiritual; memory is a sensitive organ, and that's what interests Milène Guermont. "

Emilie Bouvard, 2012

THE EXHIBITION *SENSITIVE MEMORIES*

Contemporary concrete works visit the memories of the Soubise Hotel!

Abstract

Contemporary art crosses the doors of the Archives Museum of France!

Beginning with the Nomadic Days organized by the Town Hall of the 3rd arrondissement and extending throughout June, the exhibition *SENSITIVE MEMORIES!* by Milène Guermont fits into the historic settings of the Soubise Hotel.

They are also steeped in history and endowed with memory, her poetic concrete works are "archives of sensations and emotions", which interact with those of the museum. Some of them come alive according to the magnetic field of the visitors, when they touch them!

We also discover *MÉMOIRE DE GIRAFE*, a piece created for this event.

Concept

This exhibition brings to life the collective memory held by the National Archives and the intimate memory carried by each of us.

It is to make visible the different memories and their links which interest the artist: this porosity, this unique capacity of each one to record consciously or not what surrounds him.

We could compare it to the concept of "sympathy" of the Greek philosopher Posidonos who explained it by "No individual [...] can be abstracted or absolved from the rest of the Universe".

Subjected from a very young age to synesthesia and reminiscences (most of the time triggered by touch), Milène Guermont is thus led to travel in time and space. Different elements (images, poems, words, sounds, breaths, ...) linked to her personal experience or to a historical fact suddenly come together in her mind and throughout her body which are themselves spaces of memory.

The scenography is revealed as a metaphor for synesthesia, time travel, improbable links between two moments, places, people, ...

The memory of the mind is combined with that of the body.

Presented artworks

nOsTRA CENA



Black colored engraving on a white concrete sheet: 6 ft. *3 ft. *0,6 in.

This work constitutes a palimpsest of Humanity, where the Supper of Leonardo da Vinci and the photo taken in Hiroshima illustrate the ambivalence of our society: religion and nuclear power are two constructions of man which can also destroy it.

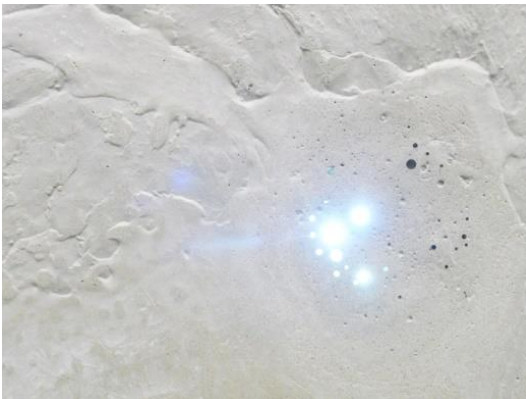
MÉMOIRE DE GIRAFE



Library giraffe, CD fragments of different sizes.

On a "giraffe" of this place of history and recording, crystallized national on CDs that have been heated.

MUR NUÉES



6 ft. * 6ft *0.3 in. of polysensual concrete

The wall becomes memory thanks to the Polysensual Concrete. Touch it. A sound is then triggered (rain, wind or laughter of angels) which causes a wave of light in rhythm with the sound wave.

CRISTALLISATION



Concrete slabs crater of 2 ft. * 2ft. *0.3 in.

Brutally frozen landscapes, simply presented in American boxes with which a subtle play of shadows, voids and hues of shade is created.

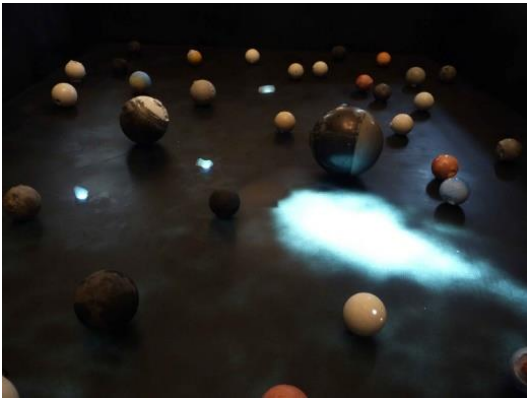
CONCRETOGRAPHIES



Concrete print on Fabriano sheet of 2,33 ft. *1,64 ft.

Like a memory that changes every time we remember it, the square foot, memory of my action on concrete, becomes relief on a sheet of paper.

COSMO



Aérogels and Craters or Polysensual Concrete balls with diameters between 0.7 in. and 0.16 in. with or without crystal inlays.

In a limited space appears a new universe, a cosmogony with its milky way, its *PLANETS*, its clouds. Each of these
In a limited space appears a new universe, a cosmogony with its milky way, its *PLANETS*, its clouds.
Each of these *PLANETS* is unique, its lights, craters, lakes, rings, colors...

BARREL



1.41 ft. *0,95 ft. of Polysensual Concrete.

This barrel has kept in the memory of its material all the seas encountered. Caress it and you will hear, according to your magnetic field, the sound of one of these seas, causing waves of light in the concrete in rhythm with the sound.

Main moments

- NOMADIC Festival from May 31 to June 3. Created on the initiative of the 3rd arrondissement town hall, it invites the public to meet the creators of the Haut Marais.
- Opening door on May 31 at 6pm.
- Guided tours by the artist every day at 4.30 p.m. from May 31 to June 3, then every Thursday at 4.30 p.m.
- " Creative Process ": Interview with Émilie Bouvard (art historian and critic) and Hugo Daniel (art historian) on June 6 at 6 p.m.
- Interlude by the pianist Éric Artz on June 17 at 4:30 p.m.
- Round table: discussion hosted by Isabelle de Maison Rouge between Jeanne Susplugas, Yann Toma and Damien Valéro, who each present a work on the theme of memory, on June 18 at 6 p.m.
- Jean Lambert-Wild's performance, director and director of the Centre dramatique national de Normandie, on June 30 from 2 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Practical details

- Dates: May 31 to July 8, 2012.
- Hours: Every day except Tuesday and public holidays, from 10 a.m. to 5.30 p.m., Saturday and Sunday from 2 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.
- Address: National Archives, Hôtel de Soubise, 60 rue des Francs-Bourgeois, 75003 Paris.

For more information:

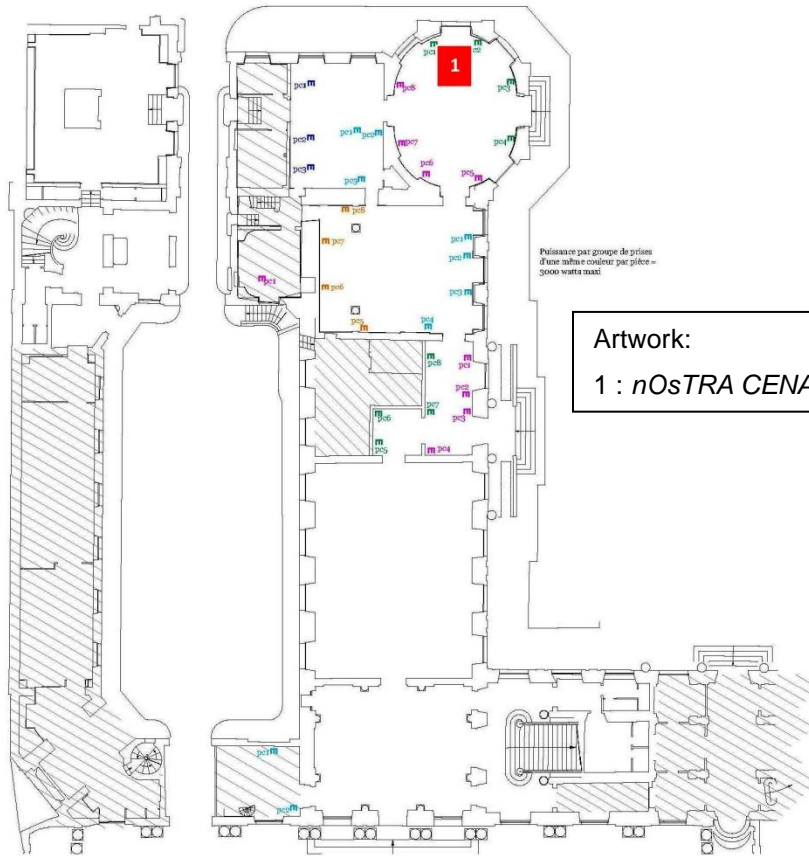
contact@mileneguermont.com

The *SENSITIVE MEMORIES!* exhibition was made possible thanks to the support of:



Placement of artworks:

Rez-de-chaussée

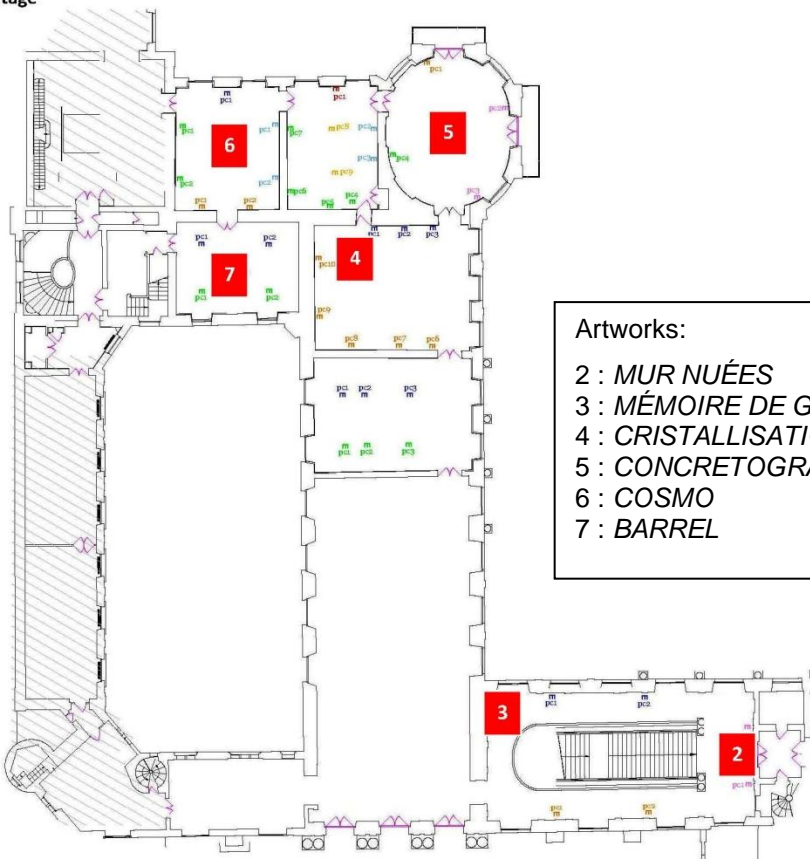


Artwork:

1 : *nOsTRA CENA*

Salon du Prince

1^{er} étage



Artworks:

2 : *MUR NUÉES*

3 : *MÉMOIRE DE GIRAFE*

4 : *CRISTALLISATION*

5 : *CONCRETGRAPHIES*

6 : *COSMO*

7 : *BARREL*

Escalier d'Honneur

Galerie 1er étage

Chambre de la Princesse

Salon de la Princesse

Salle du Dais

Salle Empire

THE SOUBISE HOTEL

The Soubise Hotel, formerly the Clisson Hotel and then the Guise Hotel, is one of the most prestigious mansions in Paris.



The Soubise Hotel
© Archives nationales (Département de la conservation, pôle Images)



Princess room

Located in the 3rd arrondissement, in the heart of the Marais district, it is the headquarters of the National Archives, which houses the Rohan Hotel adjoining the exhibition halls, together forming the Museum of French History.

For more information: www.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr

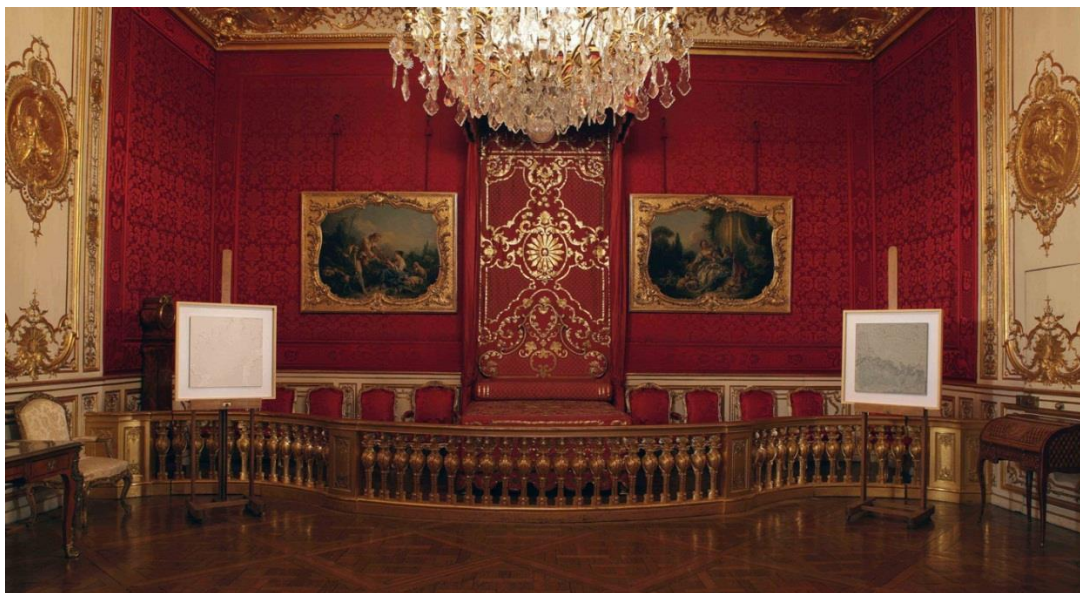
MILÈNE GUERMONT

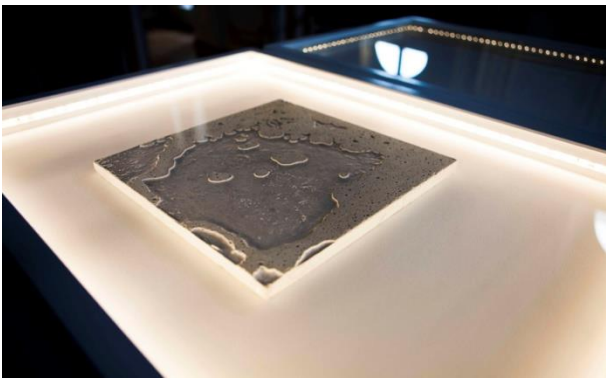
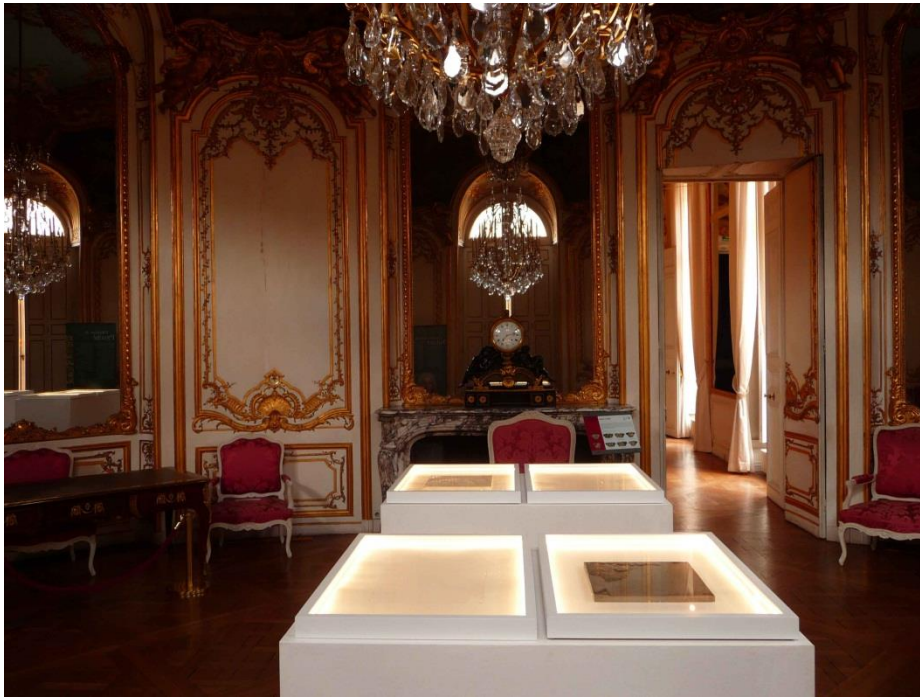
Milène is born in Normandy in 1981, trained as an engineer and an artist.

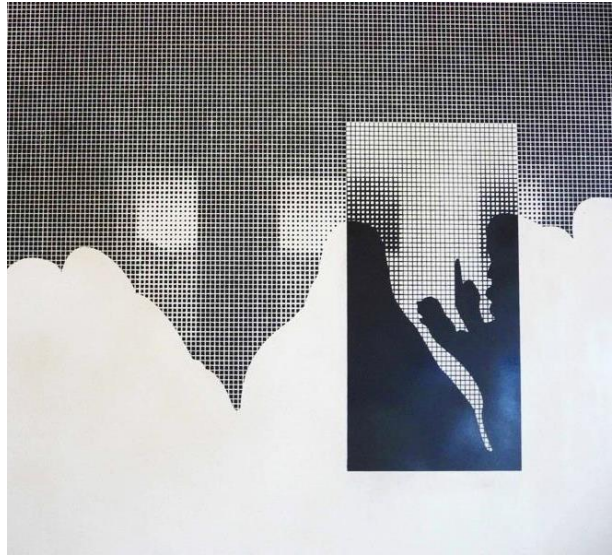
Working mainly from special concretes which she knows how to transform into sensitive and animated pieces, her artworks have already been exhibited in France and the USA.

www.mileneguermond.com

Photos of the exposition







Short commentary by TV CHAMPS ELYSEES



Interview de Milène Guermont par Canal Académie

06/2012

More info [here](#)