

Cécile Andrieu

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Since the end of the 80s, Cécile Andrieu's work is clearly in echo with the very accurate sentence pronounced by Italo Calvino on the occasion of a conference given in 1983 and entitled *Monde écrit et monde non écrit* (Written World and Unwritten World): "This world that I see, whose we agree to say it is *the* world, appears for me, at least mostly, as already conquered, colonized by words: it is a world on which weighs a thick crust of speech. Our life events are already classified, judged, commented, even before they occur. We live in a world where everything is already read before beginning to exist. Not only what we see, but even our eyes are saturated of written language..." She walked herself in the Japanese culture by the learning of its language, and was able to measure from the inside the power of this determination of our perception of the world by the words which say it.

Thus Cécile Andrieu offers to words (and their supports, such as dictionaries) to experience, but in the opposite direction, the destiny they make themselves undergo to reality (or rather the look we have on it): She rushes them into the material reality, makes them "things", allowing the latter then to take its revenge on language. But it would be naïve to believe that man can exist as man in a reality that would be as an "absolute" reality, we mean here a reality free from any human mark, any significant; a naivety which is not at all the one of Cécile Andrieu who recognizes herself that it is not a question for her of "breaking totally the ontological link between words and the world"; And she adds: "Through this intervention on words or types, what I'm trying to get into is to create a situation which encourages the spectator-reader to revisit its relation with the words and the world".

Cécile Andrieu's "cracking" approach appears thus as completely modern in the sense that it implements with consciousness what art has always realized without knowing it (in avant-garde to philosophy), namely the questioning of a state of the world by the fact of sending back the significant image to people who live in it, who, as a result, are in the necessity shaking up what was up to there their present, to settle a renewed world as high as their new ongoing degree of consciousness.

Ouverture (Opening): 2010

From the French dictionary Larousse Pocket in which pages were cut before being placed in a case, now not showing more than few "vestiges" of the dictionary (23,8 x 13,8 x 10 cm, wood, natural pigments).

Temptation is big to believe that "the" reality can be glimpse under the cracking of the words (and of the world which accompanies it); some people were able to believe that this reality was nature ("clean" from any culture); but nature is, since man exists, itself already "read" through cultural codes. So, what Cécile Andrieu settles, in a very lucid way, isn't what she would ambitiously present as a kind of absolute reality finally revealed, but the silence without which the break with the logorrhea of a time period would not be possible.

Vocem 3D: 2011

French and Japanese dictionaries of which pages were finely cut and then compressed behind openwork walls similar to those of certain loudspeakers (45 x 105 x 49,4 cm, steel, wood, lacquer).

Pierres de silence: 2013

Installation of 26 pieces inspired by the Go game (20x61x61cm, fragments of pages of French and other languages dictionaries, mixed technique)

However some of Cécile Andrieu's works quite particularly raise questions; those are maybe the ones where the artist is highly contemporary. As through no will of its own, it seems, against her word too, that she doesn't moreover miss to associate generously with her works of silence, revealing there all their depth, Cécile Andrieu proposes disturbing works; and to perceive this dimension, we must have precisely the courage to look at these works as the artist can't generally stop herself to invite us to do so, by breaking her own speech on her works and by revealing a sense that the artist maybe doesn't suspect herself, a sense which is beyond her, but nevertheless seems to reveal itself in its works.

In this way, the works that are discussed here give evidence of the contemporary violence displayed against the thought. Indeed, with Cécile Andrieu, we already said it, words sink into the material, but, according to the artist, this approach aims at inviting in a renewal of the look on the world by means of the renewal of the speeches accompanying the latter; thus some works seem to go farther: they seem to reveal, by the violent words materialization, the victory of the furious material (by the thought of understanding itself) on the thought as reason (and based on man's humanity). As for example, *Immolation* (2010), *Énergie latente* (2014), with evocative titles, and *Point silencieux* (2014). To this I would gladly add the series *Voyelles* (2014) which presents soft rubber letters, hung on a nail, as nailed in the pillory¹.

Immolation presents lead block capitals which were hammered one by one "until they become almost illegible, to repress their existence as signs and make feel their weight". These characters are spread over a long table "representing the world", on whom we perceive cracks, breaks, deformations. The relevant question, there, is: what will remain to the men to recompose the words of their new speeches?

Afterward, we say to ourselves that after all Cécile Andrieu has not so much reached, most of the time², the agreed speeches as much as the material (even spiritual) of language (of languages)! If man doesn't find the letters which allow him to build sentences, will he not be condemned to a *definitive* silence? But wouldn't a definitive silence cause the humanity degradation and, below, its end? *Énergie Latente* presents pages of dictionaries finely cut and then compressed in tubes which evoke "fuel rods in the heart of nuclear reactors". We know the drawings of nuclear power, drawn by those terrible rods, when they are used against man: images that remind in us of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and that Japan now have sealed in its history. Doesn't Cécile Andrieu live and create exactly on this ground that experienced apocalypse?

Immolation : 2010

Lead block capitals hammered one by one until they become almost illegible, then spread over a long table representing the world. (91,5x100x750 cm, lead, wood, ink).

Finally, I shall refer to *Point silencieux*, a vast installation made of dictionary pages crushed one by one and mixed with lime. This is the way that words "casually" disappear... A quiet work? Maybe not that much: This work reproduces without knowing it, but not without revealing it to us with gravity, gestures orchestrated by Nazism when trying to remove any traces of extermination, even crushing bones and covering skeletons (that the agents had to call by euphemism: the mannequins) exactly with lime⁴. In this way, Cécile Andrieu's art, beyond any speech that the artist could consciously herself associate to it, appears as a powerful art telling us of our time and its tragedies.

This work reflects the negative moment (*moment du négatif*). Taken herself in the discomfort, even the indisposition of this moment, Cécile Andrieu waits for the negation of the negative moment (*la négation du négatif*), namely the moment of the victorious assertion (*l'affirmation victorieuse*) against adversity and dangers. The artist places us with her at a crossroads: from destruction can follow destruction's frenzy or renewal, as it was regularly the case in the ongoing human history. Then? Which way are we going to choose? This is what Cécile Andrieu seems to seriously ask us through her work...

Point silencieux: 2014

Japanese-Chinese-French dictionaries crushed and mixed in lime (45x860x860 cm, lime, iron).

1. A notice was nailed on the pillory explaining the condemnation motives of a torture victim, thus exposing this one to general reprobation.
2. For example, we are talking about smashing to pieces copies of local newspapers instead of letters or dictionaries (respectively words and sentences unities). In *Culture*², "newspaper is used as a symbol of an essentially expressed by words culture.