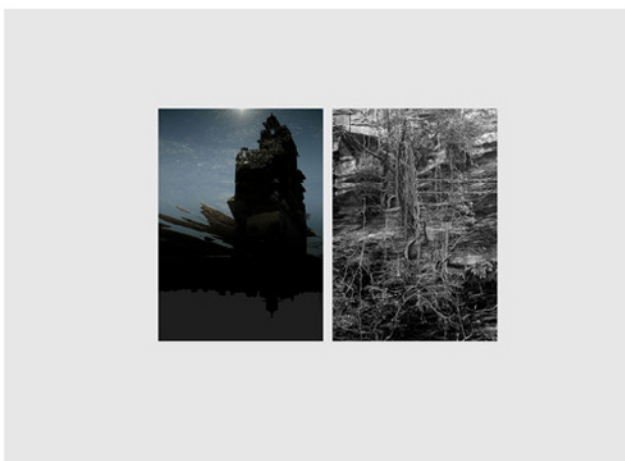


Female Power and Deconstructed Images by Kate Lemay

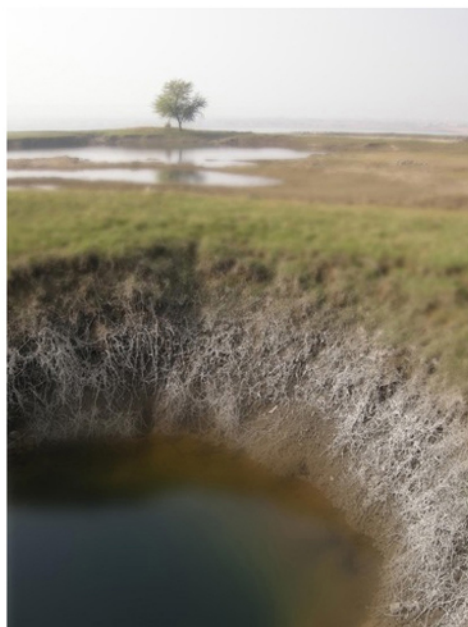
Personnage Paysage - Exposition personnelle d'Anne-Sophie Emard
Galerie Odile Ouizeman
10/12 rue des Coutures Saint-Gervais, 75003
Paris, France
14 May 2009 - 13 June 2009



Stepping out of Galerie Dominique Fiat, go just a couple of steps and into the domain of the graceful Odile Ouizeman. Ms. Ouizeman's latest selected artist is Anne-Sophie Emard, whose large-format photographs of spaces and land are organized into diptychs or are featured alone. Emard is interested in manipulating the photograph further to employ the message or personality that she perceived from each landscape. The diptych presentation helps create the conversation that some landscapes might have with one another. For example, a photograph of a large frozen piece of ice resembling a glacier is paired with the white structure of a foundation. In the foundation, the walls are handmade and it seems like there are forms buried underneath the surface. Conversely, the glacier is still alive, seeming to shrink back, and propels the viewer to re-examine the white structure again. Is it a trick of the eye, or do the buried forms seem alive, like the glacier? The dialogue is at once fascinating and confusing as the viewer shifts between the two photographs.



Emard presents places that she has been in a larger format perhaps to encourage people to question where they are and to truly be aware of what is in the surrounding environment. Her camera doesn't miss anything and furthermore, she fine-tunes the parts of the image that she wants to emphasize. The larger photo of a raw-space environment and empty warehouse features a blurred background in vertical blocks of matte blues and tan. The art historian in me recalled the American artist Richard Diebenkorn's large, abstract, structured landscapes. The beautiful blurred background eerily offsets the raw, abandoned space, which I later learned was a site of one of the Nazi death camps.



Emard is trying to deconstruct images that one might otherwise take for granted. The viewer needs to spend time with these large photographs, but he or she will probably find the puzzle interesting. Another diptych pair is contains a photo of what seems like a waterfall, gorgeous in its splendor and might. A catwalk over it gives away the synthetic history, however, and upon closer inspection, the large rock in the foreground is some part of a dam. To the sides of the catwalks, tiny streams of white water rebel against this manmade structure. The whole scene is still beautiful, despite the foolish encroachment of man upon nature. Despite its fragility in face of the powerful waterfall, the catwalk still crowns the scene.

The pair to the waterfall scene is a nightscape of a wall with four square openings like windows. The structure resembles a garage door. The whole thing is lit by a spot light and dirty strange things hang from the square openings, as well as bits of grass and articles like those found in gutters or sewage drains. In fact, a pump lurks to the right, almost hidden in shadow. The filth is beyond human capacity and the eerie lighting makes us wonder what is in the machined structures that are behind the human world.

The look at industry is not accidental--Emard was trained at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Clermont Ferrand, an area with an industrial influence. I had the pleasure of meeting Emard, who was delightfully ensconced by friends and family. She told me of her travels and of being profoundly affected by the sights she saw which were vastly different from the westernized France. She is interested in the collective memory of these sites that she has seen and photographed, and reworks these photos to achieve a visual parallel to the feeling she had.



Don't miss the back room, where four screens display loops of different video, part of Emard's most recent work. They each feature women's bodies in some way, but resign the body to null, repeated actions. Her other most recent work is immediately to the left as you enter the gallery. It is a series of eight images of film stills, pulled from American films, which are printed onto canvas. She then embroidered onto the image with a machine. It is an intense paradox--these pretty female film stars whose faces are annihilated by the stitching of a skull or some other design. Jessica Lange has been stitched out by a Darth Vader-esque alien skull, and this does wonders for her on-screen power. What is so fascinating and successful is that the femininity of these stars has been destroyed by the synthetic, machine version of what was a woman's craft--embroidery. The women are in action with a potent strength, ironically enhanced by the refined, gentle woman's art of embroidery. The contradiction in terms is even more effective when one realizes how the gentle woman's craft has now evolved into that done by a massive machine.

--Kate C. Lemay

(*Images, from top to bottom: Anne-Sophie Emard, *Julianne*, caisson lumineux cadre chêne, 90 x 107 cm, courtesy of the Artist and Galerie Odile Ouizeman. Anne-Sophie Emard, *Rachael et Rick*, 2008, diasec, 2 x (100cm x 75cm), courtesy of the Artist and Galerie Odile Ouizeman. Anne-Sophie Emard, *Karen*, 2008, diasec, 100 x 130cm, courtesy of the Artist and Galerie Odile Ouizeman. Anne-Sophie Emard, *Paul*, 2008, diasec, 100 x 130cm, courtesy of the Artist and Galerie Odile Ouizeman.)