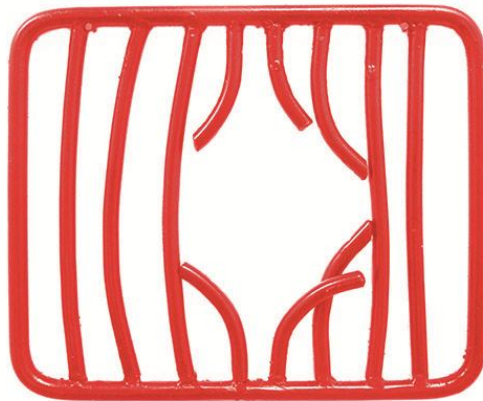


Histoires de je (part 1)

Works by Françoise Coutant, Anne Deguelle, Cui Xiuwen, Ghazel, Mehdi-Georges Lahlou, Joel Person, Sophia Pompéry, Anila Rubiku, Marion Tampon Lajarriette et Yuan Yanwu.
Curators : Azad Asifovich and Hélène Lacharmoise

From October 11 to November 15



The quest and recognition of individual and social identity is a human need in any civilized society. Paradoxically, standardization and globalization models that dominate the modern world, too often deny this existential search. Stereotypes and mass identification hide the particularities of each individual or social group. Among the factors of this phenomenon of normalization is the image. Everywhere, the image imposes subliminal codes that inhibit assertiveness. Sometimes it goes to the point of generating a form of intolerance, if not censorship vis-à-vis the a-normality. However, the image can also be used as a vector to an affirmation of the self.

"Histoires de je (part 1)" could be translated by "Stories of I". First in a series of exhibitions that Galerie Dix9 plans to show with art works centred on the quest for identity. A confrontation of several artists with different backgrounds and culture is one of the peculiarities of this series, showing various approaches on the same question: self-portraits, masked games, mockery, self-seeking through another, looking for each other through the "I", image of the artist, the viewer, the woman. Questioning the scope of clichés and conventions established in a specific environment, these works illustrate an identification quest in individual and social memory in the light of a personal story.

All positions that can be expressed through any medium: performance, video, photography, sculpture, painting, drawing or installation. The purpose is indeed not only to show what those art works mean but also how they convey meaning.

Cultural, religious or sexual -- the search for identity is at the heart of **Mehdi-Georges Lahlou** work. As he grew up in a multicultural environment, with a Muslim and a Christian parent, Lahlou experienced our multicultural and multiform society in daily life. Always working in a light-hearted and intelligent way, he breaks through barriers and plays with the ambiguity present in aesthetics.

In *Untitled – haut et bas*, he transforms his body just as he subverts social norms, wearing feminine attributes (shoes with red heel) while showing off her hairy legs.

Another approach, inspired by Buddhist religion and Chinese painting, are photographs of the *Existential Emptiness* series that symbolize the different aspects of the self **Cui Xiuwen**. They depict a young girl and her double in wax, their relationship evoking the duality of yin and yang, body and soul, life and lifelessness. In a different genre, this existential quest is found in *La petite harmoniome* by **Francoise Coutant**. This striking sculpture is simply a portrait at scale 1 of the artist, made with elements of a harmonium keyboard. Spectral work, the feminine form enclosed in a metal rectangle is reminiscent of Francis Bacon cages. She holds out her arms, hands opened, as an invitation to reflect on the precariousness of human life and facing death with equanimity.

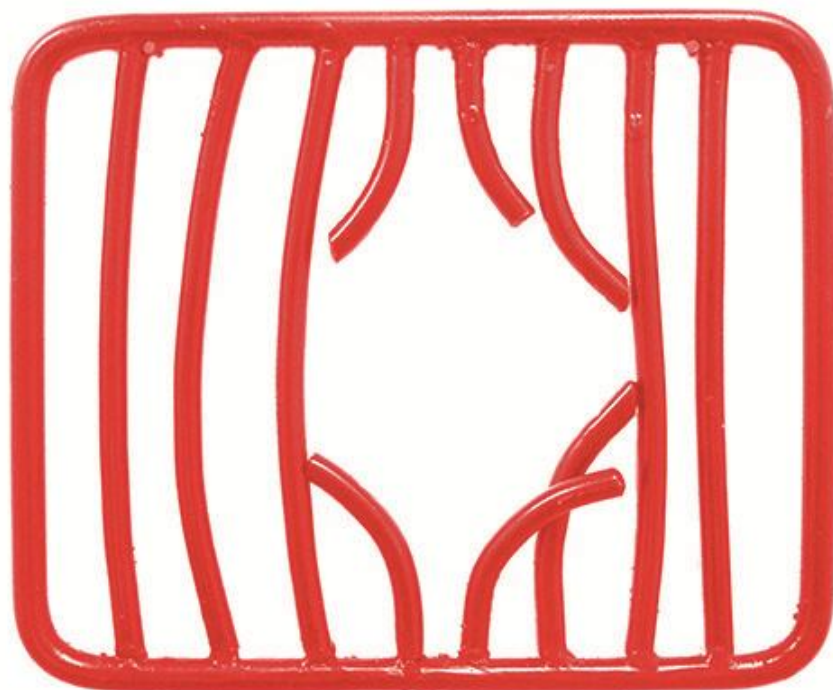
In *Daii J* (Uncle J) episode 8 of *Family Tree* (first shown in France, and new approach to the famous autobiographical series *Me*), **Ghazel** continues her quest of identity and displacement. She reconstructs here childhood memories and shot them at her family home in Tehran while adding "the other" in her narration. She plays each of the protagonists: Me (Ghazel in chador, a symbol of some of her multiple identities) is both Uncle J and the dog Jason. These are anecdotes from her own story, tinged with humor inherent in the Iranian culture but which may be reflected in the personal memory of any viewer. **Yuan Yanwu** questioned her own image through the Other, that self she was and is no longer. Made from old family photographs, the artist paints *Youth Self Portraits* with Photoshop, the idealized image that the mirror seemed to offer to the little girl while admiring herself. The mirror, a tool for introspection by the reflected image it gives to the self, is the subject of several works by **Sophia Pompéry**. Her *semantic mirrors* are mirrors printed with phrases that invite the viewer to engage a dialogue with the self. It's also through writing that **Anne Deguelle** plays a dual identity, that of Hamlet and her own, reactivating phrases from Shakespeare (*Sentences of Stars*).

In the view of the other, the artist sometimes analyses individual identities. The sculptures *Free again* by **Anila Rubiku** portray freed women after an arbitrary incarceration. These interpretations of singular identities were born at the end of a project by the artist in her hometown of Tirana with women imprisoned for murder. The purpose was to identify the personal stories of these women by having them express themselves through interviews, drawing or sewing. The project ended with a public debate in which the women were released. **Joel Person** questions identity and its relationship to power. Drawing the fantasy portrait that tells him her muse, he expresses the desire of voyeurism and taking power in this woman, who dreams herself both male and female

Questioning the image with multimedia tools, **Marion Tampon-Lajarriette** analyzes its representation system, a system that drives our perception of reality and the identification process. In her series *The Viewers*, a free fall of characters into the vertiginous image perspective uses a reoccurring motif in cinematographic movies. This visual effect, which often occurs at a crucial point in the narrative, could be seen as a representation of the complex relationship between the image and the viewer. The viewer's immersion in the movie and identification with the characters coexists with the distance between him and that «other world» of images. These two antagonistic movements, of involvement and distance, are constantly mixing in the psychic space of each viewer. Not only do images penetrate our minds, but they are also recreated through the transformative and selective process of our memory. For its part, **Anne Deguelle** advanced to the perception of identity. In *Double Portrait*, the artist presents two side by side portraits of Marcel Duchamp as a teenager. Strictly identical, yet the photographs look different.

Would identity be an illusory quest, doomed to endless stories?

Hélène Lacharmoise



Anila Rubiku, *Free again*
iron, paint, 20 x 23 x 1 cm, 2014



Mehdi-Georges Lahlou, *Sans titre (haut et bas)*
C-print, diptyque 50 x 50 cm each, 2009



Anne Deguelle, *Double portrait (Marcel Duchamp)*
silver print, diptyque 120 x 80 cm each, 1997



*One day, when I got back from nursery,
Daii J took my red ice cream
and gave it to Jason.
Jason was a huge brown Afghan dog.
This is my very first memory.*

*Ghazel, Daii J, episode 8, Family tree
video, diptyque, 41'31, 2013*



Cui Xiuwen, *Existential Emptiness*
C-print under plexi, 200 x 90 cm, 2009



Françoise Coutant, *La petite Harmoniome*
metal, wood, resin, textile, 150 x 50 x 50 cm



Yuan Yanwu, *Yanwu 13 years old*
C-print, 110 x 110 cm + frame, 2009



Joel Person, *Insurrection 2*
charcoal on paper mounted on wood, 80 x 80 cm



Sophia Pompéry, *Semantic mirror*
sandblasted mirror, 20 cm diameter, 2011



Marion Tampon Lajarriette, *The Viewers 1*
Lambda print, 65 x 120 cm + frame, 2010