

Charles Geoffrion: We are in Rossinière, in Switzerland, in the Marc Jancou Chalet, just a few steps away from the Grand Chalet of Balthus Klossowski de Rola. How do you feel about showing your work on this "territory"?

Marie Hazard: I don't know Switzerland very well and I'd never been to Rossinière. It's a discovery. I've been completely seduced by the nature – the mountains and especially the lake. I feel at peace here. You can hear the water, see the birds, smell the flowers. I've quickly made myself at home here.

I had an idea of Rossinière, the image of the Balthus' Grand Chalet. I had imagined it as a space for creative work and a place of isolation, impenetrable and intriguing. Through the fence you can see this enormous façade in wood, with engravings of scenes from the Bible. I imagine Balthus, who spent so many years working here, in a solitary space but also spending time with his family. It's funny because I worked for Sheila Hicks and her atelier turns out to be Balthus' old workshop in Paris. It's not a place open to the public and the Grand Chalet also made me think of that.

Above all, the geography of Switzerland has made me think about space, about boundaries and barriers, both cultural and linguistic, of this country in the heart of Europe.

Charles Geoffrion: Can you remind us when you started weaving? How and why did it become your preferred medium?

Marie Hazard: I started weaving when I was studying in London, at Central Saint Martins. During my studies, I learnt everything about yarns, all the techniques of arranging them and how to use the loom. I also studied contemporary technologies to employ this ancestral and artisanal technique in a modern way, especially through screen printing. This learning process enabled me to create my own canvases and define the lines of my own era.

The idea of doing something with both my hand and my mind fascinates me. I like starting from nothing, just a thread, and arriving at an a whole, an entirety that is the result of my artistic expression. Weaving is a very metaphorical medium, even though working with the yarns is a concrete and pragmatic act - of doing.

Charles Geoffrion: Before you started working on this show, what was your view of Alighiero Boetti as an artist?

Marie Hazard: Alighiero Boetti is one of the major artistic figures of the second half of 20th century. I first encountered his work while I was still in secondary school. Two years later, I saw his work in London for the first time, having only just started my studies. This was in 2015 and his textiles were part of a group show at the White Cube, called *Losing the compass*. What questioned me especially was this large *mappa* where I discovered the work of embroidery. It's not the kind of artisanal traditional embroidery you find in Calais, but one that goes beyond all norms. The threads are extremely fine, it's very technically rigorous but especially the meaning of the work is important, echoing the movements of people, territories and languages, the world in the larger sense, geopolitics. The work is exhibited in the gallery space

but invites the viewer to travel, to change location. Looking at it, I had the feeling of no longer being in London, a sense of losing all spatial and temporal references.

Boetti embodies the history of the world. I see him as a very modest artist, able to efface himself, to step back behind his work. There are not many pictures of him on the internet, he likes to remain discreet. I feel a certain gentleness in him. His titles are simple but powerful. He manages to do a lot with very little. Even though some of his pieces are large, most of them are not monumental. For example the *Arazzi*: they are small but carry so much in them. And it's the same for his other works: *Object and subject*, *Essence and substance*, *The Useful and the Useless*, *Between horizontal and vertical*, which all refer to an association between concrete and contrary elements. You can understand his vision from a single title; the title says it all.

Charles Geoffrion: What links could you make between your own practice and Boetti's? What do you think are the points of contact and the differences between your respective approaches to weaving?

Marie Hazar: We are not of the same generation and did not evolve as artists in the same era. In fact, it's a bit anecdotal but I was born in the year that Boetti died, in 1994.

However, we do have a few things in common. First, we start from the same thing: a thread, a needle, a shuttle (in my case) and we weave. We use similar colours; the shape is always a square or a rectangle and we rarely make monumental work. What we also have in common is the strong presence of language (words, letters, sentences).

We both work with colour, juxtaposing different colours: if for example we run out of yarn of one colour, we continue weaving with another to finish the pattern we started.

Contrary to Alighiero Boetti, I am not looking for perfection in the artistic product. Quite the opposite: I make place for the accidental, it is in fact an integral part of my creative process. In the works that are in this show, there are many errors, folds, threads that disappear or hang down.

Also, I use techniques such as printing, which is part of my day and age, and I make use of it in my practice. This considerably transforms the relationship to time in my work. While it takes me less than a minute to digitally print a pattern on the textile that I had to first weave completely manually, Boetti would spend dozens or even hundreds of hours on each piece, requiring indispensable human reinforcements (using the work of embroiderers in Afghanistan or Pakistan). With me, the digital printer embellishes my weaving by creating a pattern that completely changes how the work is conceived of both visually and in terms of its interpretation. I work completely by myself, except for when my younger brother, Loup, helps me stretch out the warp to save time, because that takes me at least a week before I can start weaving. For the moment, I'm not quite ready to work with any assistants, because I need to feel the weight of time, a cyclical rhythm that accompanies my everyday life. My schedule adapts to the stages of the weaving process.

Another difference is also significant, of the grid as a reference to create the weaving. To weave a certain pattern, you have to follow a process that is represented on a grid. When you look at Boetti's drawings, you can see that he too follows a framework. The grid is a sequence of squares in which he inscribes letters. On my side, I never start from a grid in order to weave, there is no technical data sheet. However, I do start from my own drawing, which is abstract. I base my work on this abstract and conceptual idea of a textile in painting, in order to create a work that is essentially also abstract. The drawing replaces the traditional grid of the weaver.

Charles Geoffrion: In September 1967, Alighiero Boetti took part in Germano Celant's Arte Povera show. Has the visual language and material of arte povera had any influence on your own work?

Marie Hazard: When I started studying at CSM in 2014, I found myself in front of a weaving loom for the first time in my life and the first work I made was a chain of white cotton threads which I combined with twigs from a tree I found in one of London's parks. The piece was an interpretation of my childhood, of my memories from the French countryside, a place in Bourgogne. Using the humble material of found wood could be seen as a reference to *arte povera*; however, I did not refer to it directly.

I have not been influenced by *arte povera*, which is a specific artistic movement originating in a particular geographical, historical and economical context. Of course, I knew of the movement because I learned about it in secondary school and later during my university studies. Among the different avant-garde movements, I feel the closest to Bauhaus. I have been deeply influenced by the work of Annie Albers, which I discovered during her retrospective show at the Tate. I'm interested in the visual aspects of movement and forms; I've separated myself from all the strict technical restrictions imposed by the Bauhaus movement.

Charles Geoffrion: In the work presented in this show, most are deformed, crumpled, some have folds, a kind of wear and tear. Can you say a bit more about what your intention was, if there was one?

Marie Hazard: Yes, that was intentional. It is the first time I have worked in this way. First, I weave, then I wash the weavings in a washing machine; some are cut up and sewn back together to create a new textile. Others are simply washed to transform the material. For example, if you machine-wash a cashmere yarn, it changes, becomes more rigid yet remains soft. For this exhibition, I also used polyester for the first time, which creates knots when you wash it.

I introduce a new form into the frame of the weaving. In some weavings, I intentionally leave fringes. In my piece *Déplie-moi [Unfold me]*, I invite the viewer to glimpse the work's imperfections. I work against its smoothness; you can see and feel the material. It is the same with the support: I refuse to use any frame or chassis, which makes it easier to exhibit and move the work. The support is free, stripped of any other support materials. I am not striving for an aesthetically beautiful or perfect product. My works are the result of voluntary and involuntary errors. My process is more important than its result.

Charles Geoffrion: When you see the show, you understand to what extent words and language in general are really omnipresent in your work.

Marie Hazard: The presence of language in my work is very important and still more so in this specific show in Switzerland. After all, we move through a territory that includes several languages: French, German, Romansh and Italian. That was the first thing that struck me when I came to Rossinière: that the language spoken changes from one canton to another. I therefore wanted to pay tribute to language as a communication tool and a bridge between different cultures.

Charles Geoffrion: In your piece Useful Net, we find the verses of the Swiss poet and translator Philippe Jaccottet. What is your relationship to books and why did you choose to refer to Jaccottet's modern poetry?

Marie Hazard: Books do play an important role in my research stage, even though I have also worked a lot with institutions such as Pro Helvetia or the Institut Suisse in Paris, as well as with documentaries, newspaper articles, atlases or material from the internet. I like books not only as tools, but just as much as objects (the materials, threads, leather, paper, ink, typography, the way they feel and smell).

I first read his collection *Winter Light*, then *Through and Orchard* with Pierre Talcoat's illustrations in the Fata Morgana edition. I remembered that Philippe Jaccottet referred to weaving and specifically to the weaving shuttle, to network as a metaphor of the cyclicity of time, from life to death. There is this idea of a back-and-forth movement between life and death that has touched me deeply. I find the metaphor of weaving a "useful net" very beautiful. Hence, I wanted to honour Jaccottet's work by including him directly in my weaving.

Charles Geoffrion: We are living in a super-globalised era where information circulates ever more quickly. Is weaving for you a way of freezing time? Let's take the example of your piece Get me the news, 2019.

Marie Hazard: Yes, it is a way of freezing my own time. I weave the present, the everyday, the mundane. That's how I express the idea of contemporaneity in my work.

In the magazines I wanted to choose fragments, titles in different languages but with a universal appeal. Words that you can quickly decipher and interpret. For example, there's the word *Brexit*, which you will understand regardless of your mother tongue. There is something direct in the very title of this work, an injunction hinting at the immediacy of our needs linked to our era. The format of my works also reflects the chaos of our time.

When I was doing research for the show at Marc Jancou, he would regularly send me whole piles of Swiss magazines. I would read the titles, look at the typography and the images. I would then rip out the pages I found interesting, crumple them as if the magazine had passed through the hands of many readers. In the end, I would arrange the pages on the floor and take a picture of the layout, then print and heat-press the image onto the weaving. It's like a kind of *mise-en-abyme*, a photo of a

photo, a print of a print. It is as if my weaving became a support material made of another support material, i.e. the magazine.
It's my way of trying to freeze time, of making the moments of my era last forever.

Charles Geoffrion: What are your hopes for the future? Your dreams.

Marie Hazard: I want to continue expressing myself through weaving, to go much deeper into my art.

I would like to further develop the medium of installation, creating enormous weavings that can really occupy space, where visitors are asked to come into contact with the material, to move through the strands.

I also dream of being able to continue to travel, to live in different countries and work with different communities, of discovering other weaving practices, other techniques and artists. Art is above all a communication tool, a medium of exchange.

I would like to continue exhibiting together with artists whose work I admire, both young artists and more established ones. For example, I really like the work of Eric N Mack, who lives in New York and with whom I would love to collaborate. His work with the canvas and textiles is very tactile and he uses other materials such as documents, archives, photographs, in a way that surprises and fascinates me. His show at the Brooklyn Museum made a strong impression on me. I'd also like to experiment with video as a kind of extension medium for weaving.

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Charles Geoffrion lives and works in Paris. He has followed Marie Hazard's work since her beginnings in 2012. He collaborates with the galleries Loevenbruck and Loeve&Co in Paris and has written on contemporary art for the Purple magazine. He has a special interest in the question of revivals and the lesser known artists of the 1960s and 70s.