Press kit
Lausanne, 27 August 2020

Jorge Macchi. The Submerged Cathedral (11.9 – 22.11.2020)

Jorge Macchi
The Submerged Cathedral
11.9 – 22.11.2020

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The Argentinian artist Jorge Macchi has created a new installation for the MCBA’s Espace Projet

Thanks to a play of echoes, literal and figurative, Jorge Macchi (born in 1963) has dreamed up for the MCBA’s Espace Projet a story that brings together the Cathedral of Lausanne, a prelude by Claude Debussy, and the Breton myth of the city of Ys which served as inspiration for the French composer. When they enter the Espace Projet, visitors to the museum face a range of elements that seem frozen in time, caught in an odd state. The concept of water is the thread running through various objects, a wall painting, and a sound piece.

Since the early 1990s, Jorge Macchi has gleefully hunted down symmetries, parallels, and repetitions, while playing on viewers’ perception by designing and mounting illusions. This strategy lies at the heart of the installation he calls La Cathédrale engloutie (The Submerged Cathedral), which takes its title from a Claude Debussy prelude of the same name (published in 1910).

During the design phase of his installation, Macchi delved into the history of Lausanne and its cathedral. He immediately drew a parallel between the number of bells hanging in the religious building and the number of large plate-glass windows that form one of the Project Space’s walls. Then it became absolutely clear to him that water, a recurrent motif in his work, notably for its physical and optical properties, was the founding element of the new piece. The artist saw a swimming pool in the volume and proportions of the exhibition venue. Associated with the cathedral, water then pointed Macchi in the direction of a piece by Claude Debussy that he had discovered when he was twenty years old but had never managed to use in his art until now. This prelude for piano, known for the score’s unusual notations (for instance, “Comme un écho de la phrase entendue précédemment” (Like an echo of the phrase heard before)), evokes the myth of Ys, a town that supposedly lies submerged somewhere along the coast of Brittany. The bells of the town’s cathedral, it is said, can occasionally be heard to toll from the depths of the sea. Sometimes it can even be glimpsed.
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In the MCBA’s Espace Projet, Macchi brings together these different cultural references. Plastic bottles seem to float while their concrete shadows rest on the floor; a pool hose winds its way through the space like a rolling wave; a broom handle leaning against the wall is broken at a precise angle; and the hands of a clock have stopped, creating a symmetrical figure. Visitors find themselves plunged in a space that seems to have been filled with water once – the grey veil on the walls would be in fact a high-water mark – and where the objects in it continue to show the flood’s effects. On the gallery’s large plate-glass windows can be seen various seemingly mysterious inscriptions. They are the names of the bells hanging in the Cathedral of Lausanne and the dates they were cast. When viewers move closer to read them, they ring out. By moving around the installation, visitors thus create a random composition, recalling the unstructured form of Debussy’s prelude.

Using these various sources and resources in a new narrative, Jorge Macchi has transformed the Espace Projet into a theater of memory.

The sound installation was developed by Manuel Eguía with the support of the Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, Argentina.

Exhibition curator: Laurence Schmidlin, curator of contemporary art

Dates of the show: 11.9 – 22.11.2020

Catalogue:


2. Press images

Images of the installation will be available from 10 September on https://www.mcba.ch/presse/
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3. Artist's biography

Jorge Macchi was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1963. He graduated in 1987 from the “Prilidiano Pueyrredón” Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes de Buenos Aires. He currently lives and works in Buenos Aires.

Prizes and grants

2002 Konex Prize, Fundación Konex, Buenos Aires
2001 John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship
2000 Fondo Nacional de las Artes Fellowship, Buenos Aires Subsidy for Artistic Creation, Fundación Antorchas, Buenos Aires First Prize, Banco de la Nación Argentina Prize, Centro Cultural Recoleta
1999 Leonardo Prize, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires
1998 Gobierno Francés Grant Ignacio Pirovano Prize to a Young Artist, Asociación Argentina de Críticos Subsidy for Artistic Creation, Fundación Antorchas, Buenos Aires
1993 First Prize, Braque Prize, Fundación Banco Patricios
1992 Diploma of Merit, Fundación Konex (installations)
1990 First Prize, Fundación Nuevo Mundo Prize, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires

Solo exhibitions

2018 Der Zauberberg, Quartz Studio, Turin Suspension Points, Galleria Continua, San Gimignano
2017 with Nicolás Fernández Sanz, Diptico, Ruth Benzacar, Buenos Aires Mikrokosmos, Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zurich with Edgardo Rudnitzky, From Here to Eternity, Alexander and Bonin, New York Perspectiva, CA2M Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo, Móstoles Threshold, Alexander and Bonin, New York
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2016  Galeria Luisa Strina, São Paulo
       MNBA, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires
       *Book of Hours*, City Hall, Deinze
       *Perspectiva*, Museo de Arte Latinoamericano MALBA, Buenos Aires

2015  *Lampo*, NC-Arte, Bogotá
       *Spectrum*, Le 10Neuf, Centre régional d’art contemporain, Montbéliard

2014  Jorge Macchi, Galleria Continua, San Gimignano
       *Memoria externa*, Galería Ruth Benzacar, Buenos Aires
       *Prestidigitador*, MUAC Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico

2013  *Container*, MAMBA Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires
       *Refractive*, Art Basel Unlimited, Basel
       *Loop*, Alexander and Bonin, New York

2012  *Light and Weight*, Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zurich

2011  Jorge Macchi, Galeria Luisa Strina, São Paulo
       *Music Stands Still*, Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, SMAK, Ghent

2010  *Crónicas Eventuales*, Galería Ruth Benzacar, Buenos Aires

2009  *Rendez-vous*, Galleria Continua, San Gimignano
       *10:5, Künstlerhaus Bremen*, Bremen
       with Edgardo Rudnitzky, *Last Minute*, Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo,
       São Paulo

2008  *Round Midnight*, Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zurich
       *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de
       Compostela

2007  *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, The Blanton Museum of Art, Austin
       *Gallery Night*, Galeria Luisa Strina, São Paulo
       *6th Bienal Mercosur*, Porto Alegre
       Galería Ruth Benzacar, Buenos Aires, Argentina

2006  *Singers Room*, University Gallery, University of Essex, Essex
       *Twilight*, Firstsite, Essex
       *Due volte nello stesso fiume*, Galleria Continua, San Gimignano

2005  *Time Machine*, Galeria Distrito4, Madrid
       *Still Song*, Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zurich
       *Doppelgänger*, La Casa Encendida, Madrid
       ArtPace, San Antonio, Texas
       *La Ascensión*, Argentina Pavilion, 51st Biennale di Venezia, Venice
       *Doppelgänger*, Galeria Ruth Benzacar, Buenos Aires
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2003  *Buenos Aires Tour*, Galería Distrito4, Madrid
      Galería Luisa Strina, São Paulo
2002  *Fuegos de artificio*, Mirta Demare Gallery, Rotterdam
      *Fuegos de artificio*, Galeria Ruth Benzacar, Buenos Aires
2001  Le 10Neuf, Centre régional d’art contemporain, Montbéliard
      *Nocturno*, Centro Cultural Recoleta, Buenos Aires
1998  *Incidental Music*, University Gallery, University of Essex, Essex
      with Miguel Rothschild, *The Killing Tear*, Galerie Jorge Alyskewycz, Paris
      *Música incidental*, Galería Ruth Benzacar, Buenos Aires
      with Gustavo Romano, *Evidencias circunstanciales*, Museo de Arte Moderno, Buenos Aires
      *The Wandering Golfer*, MUHKA Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp
1996  *Extremely Recent Works*, Duende Artists Initiative, Rotterdam
1995  Instituto de Cooperación Iberoamericana, Buenos Aires
1994  *32 morceaux d’eau*, Galerie Jorge Alyskewycz, Paris
1993  Casal de Catalunya, Buenos Aires
1992  Galerie François Mitaine, Paris
1991  Fundación Banco Patricios, Buenos Aires
1990  Galeria Alberto Elia, Buenos Aires
1989  *Pinturas y retablos de fines del siglo XX*, Galería Alberto Elia, Buenos Aires

Monographs
2016  *Jorge Macchi. The Book of Hours*, Deinze, Museum van Deinze
      *Jorge Macchi. Perspectiva*, Buenos Aires, Fundación Eduardo F. Constantini
2014  *Jorge Macchi. Prestidigitador*, Mexico, MUAC
2011  *Music Stands Still*, Ghent, SMAK/Buenos Aires, KBB
2009  *Jorge Macchi. 10:51*, Bremen, Künstlerhaus Bremen
2008  *Block/Dibujos*, Buenos Aires, Ambasciata d’Italia Istituto Italiano di Cultura/Buenos Aires, Fundación Proa
2005  *Jorge Macchi. Doppelgänger* Madrid, La Casa Encendida
      *La Ascensión*, Buenos Aires, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores
2001  *12 Views*, New York, The Drawing Center
      *Jorge Macchi*, Montbéliard, Le 10Neuf, Centre régional d’art contemporain
4. Questions for the artist

In the footsteps of Claude Debussy

For the MCBA’s Espace Projet the Argentinian artist has devised a new installation inspired by a prelude by Claude Debussy and the Cathedral of Lausanne. It is an immersive interactive piece of art that translates into space and sound the traces of an event frozen in time.

MCBA: How would you describe your show “The Submerged Cathedral”?

Jorge Macchi: The installation is made up of several smaller installations, i.e., a sound piece, a sculpture formed from a pool cleaning tube, a clock, and casts of bottles. It was imagined by drawing on the notations Claude Debussy added to the score of his prelude La Cathédrale engloutie (The Submerged Cathedral). Those notations are very peculiar. They seem more visual than simply musical. What is also singular is that those nuances give the pianist almost too much freedom in terms of interpretation! They work like an echo. The theme of the prelude is to be played fortissimo. At the end, the theme comes back but has to be performed pianissimo. It’s the first time that I’ve used this prelude in my work, even if I’ve known it for quite a long time. I’ve been trying to play it for twenty-five years (without much success!), but performing the piece more than listening to it is what inspired me. I realized that those nuances had a strong connection to my own creative strategies (symmetries, transparencies, repetitions, etc.). It’s the score that made me aware of that.

MCBA: Your installation links Debussy’s prelude and a range of elements borrowed from the context of Lausanne...

Jorge Macchi: The Breton legend of the city of Ys which Debussy translated into music tells us how the inhabitants were punished for their sins by a flood. According to the legend, even nowadays, when the weather is calm, you can still hear the bells of the cathedral and the chanting of a choir of monks rising from the depths of the sea. In the prelude, powerful chords conjure up the bells; the fortissimo playing is transformed into a pianissimo echo. That image comes up again in one of the elements of the installation I designed for MCBA. In my research on the city of Lausanne, I found information on the cathedral’s bells. They number seven, just like the windows of the Espace Projet. I brought these two elements together. When you approach each opening, you set off the sound of one of the bells.
MCBA: You were invited to take over MCBA’s Espace Projet. How did you perceive the space?

Jorge Macchi: Architecturally the Espace Projet is perfect. Rectangular, without any juts or protrusions… That put me in mind of a pool! I had to activate that space. To do that, I conjured up something that apparently took place in the past. The room had been filled with water; the water has vanished but traces of that flood remain. Odd traces, optical effects, the color of the walls, floating objects, marks indicating the water level… Visual elements recalling the past endure. The effects persist.
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5. Public engagement – Public outreach services

Guided tour open to the public (registration required; free admission)
Tuesday 10 November at 12:30 pm
With Laurence Schmidlin, curator of the exhibition

6. Museum services

Book- and Giftshop

In the MCBA Book- and Giftshop you can find monographs on Jorge Macchi, books on all of the shows currently on view, and a selection of publications on artists in the collection, the history of art and techniques and mediums, books for children, along with a range of items (notebooks, jewelry, scarves, pencils, etc.).

Hours:

Tuesday-Wednesday 10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Thursday 10:00 am - 8:00 pm
Friday-Sunday 10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Monday Closed

Le Nabi café-restaurant

Before or after your visit, Le Nabi invites you to take a break. The menu, reflecting the open, welcoming spirit of our museum, is both family oriented and refined. Drinks are all artisanal and the menu emphasizes local products that change with the seasons.

Hours:

Tuesday-Wednesday 10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Thursday 10:00 am - 8:00 pm
Friday-Sunday 10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Monday Closed

Reservations: T. 021 311 02 90 / info@lenabi.ch
MCBA partners and sponsors

The MCBA building was inaugurated on 5 April 2019. The museum’s new premises were built by the Canton of Vaud with the generous support of the City of Lausanne and the following private partnerships:

- Fondation Les Mûrons
- Loterie Romande
- Fondation Anita et Werner Damm-Etienne
- BCV
- Fondation Gandur pour l’Art
- Audemars Piguette
- Mrs. Alice Pauli
- Fondation Ernst Göhner
- Nestlé
- Fondation Art et Vie
- Philip Morris International
- ECA – Établissement cantonal d’assurance
- Abakanowicz art and culture charitable foundation
- Fondation Payot
- Association rétrospective Pierrette Gonseth-Favre