

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

CHRISTIAN BOLTANSKI
ÉPHÉMÈRES

12 APRIL – 12 MAY, 2018

OPENING RECEPTION:

THURSDAY 12 APRIL 2018, 6–8pm

"I think all my work was to ask questions, and not to have answers. And the biggest question is that I believe that everybody is totally unique and hence very important, and at the same time, everybody is so fragile."

– Christian Boltanski

Marian Goodman Gallery is pleased to present Christian Boltanski's first solo exhibition in London since 2010. He uses photography, sculpture and film to create large-scale installations that engage with shared preoccupations while being rooted in the artist's own history. Conceived as a complete installation, the exhibition includes several substantial new film pieces.

Boltanski leads visitors into this exhibition through a suspended veiled passage coalescing personal and communal memories. Bisecting the ground floor, *La Traversée de la vie* (The Crossing of Life) revisits images Boltanski worked with for a 1971 piece entitled *Album de photos de la Famille D*. For this seminal piece, he used photographs from a 1950s family album belonging to one of his friends. While endeavoring to reconstruct it chronologically, he sensed this process didn't reveal anything unique about the family, but rather their ordinariness. In Boltanski's oeuvre, portraiture invariably unearths nameless faces, ghosts of forgotten, untraceable identities. Here, where the photographs have been enlarged and printed onto thin veils that one walks under and through, their delicate, faded images seemingly belong to pasts which can no longer be fully grasped.

Two monumental film installations echo each other on either side of *La Traversée de la vie*: *Animitas (Blanc)*, made in a bleak snowscape of Ile d'Orléans, Quebec in 2017, and *Animitas (small souls)*, created in the remote, extreme conditions in Chile's Atacama Desert and shown in the 2015 Venice Biennale. Their titles are derived from the Latin *anima*, which translates as 'soul', and *animatas*, a Chilean word meaning 'roadside shrine'. Each iteration consists of hundreds of small Japanese bells with Plexiglas tags attached to tall stems planted in the ground. The configuration of the bells in each film, located under different constellations, correlates with



Animitas (Blanc), 2017
Video installation, paper
Variable dimensions

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the positions of the stars on the artist's birth date. This poetic cartography of Boltanski's origins contrasts with the bells' chimes, the wind creating gentle eulogies for lost human souls.

Life's transience is also dwelt on in a new film installation titled *Éphémères* (Mayflies), 2018. The French word 'éphémère' translates as 'ephemeral' or 'temporary' and Boltanski has documented insects whose very name speaks of their most brutally fleeting lifespans, projecting their luminescent wings across and through a room of torn, suspended veils. *Départ-Arrivée* (2015) consists of two signs composed of red and blue bulbs that are a reminder of the abrupt start and end points on the arc of life's passage, except that here Boltanski begins the exhibition with *Départ* suspended over its threshold, leaving *Arrivée* for the upstairs gallery.

Boltanski presents another new work, *Misterios* (Mysteries), 2017, across the whole of the gallery's upper floor. This video triptych documents a project made on the rocky, uninhabited coast of Bahia Bustamante in Patagonia, for the Biennial of Contemporary Art of South America. Mounted on the shore, three colossal trumpets generate a sound akin to that of whalesong when strong ocean winds pass through them. Boltanski isn't so much interested in imitation as creating something enduring beyond his own life and artistic legacy: "Maybe in a hundred years my name will be forgotten, but someone will say there was a man who came here and talked to whales."

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ABOUT THE ARTIST

Christian Boltanski was born in 1944 in Paris where he lives and works. His most recent exhibitions include *NA* at Oude Kerk in Amsterdam (on view until 29 April 2018); *Anime. Di luogo in luogo* at the Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna – MAMbo (2017); *La Salle des pendus* at Mac's Grand-Hornu (2016) and *Almas* at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Santiago, Chile (2014).

He is currently preparing several retrospective exhibitions at major institutions such as Power Station of Art in Shanghai (Spring 2018); the Israel Museum in Jerusalem (1 June – 31 October, 2018); the National Art Center in Tokyo (2019) and Centre Pompidou in Paris (September 2019).

Boltanski has been the recipient of many prestigious awards, including the Créateurs sans frontières, award for visual arts by Cultures France, in 2007; the Praemium Imperiale, Japan Art Association, in 2006; and the Kaiserring, Mönchehaus Museum Goslar, in 2001.

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The gallery would like to extend special thanks to the florist Rebel Rebel for their generous donations in participation with this exhibition.