

Portfolio

Tomoko Sauvage

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Serpentine Bell

2024

In collaboration with Elias and Yousef Anastas

Commissioned by Ruinart

Blown glass, limestone, galvanized steel and sound system



Tomoko Sauvage, Elias and Yousef Anastas have joined forces to create an immersive installation. The cone-shaped structure immerses visitors in a contemplative, distorted vision of the surrounding landscapes through a curved skin made of 103 blown-glass structural voussoirs. The sound, composed of underwater recordings including water-filled bowls and micro air bubbles emitted by chalk stones collected from the Ruinart's deep underground cellar, resonates in the sculpture. Built following principles proper to stone stereotomy, the sculpture's curved shapes enhance the diffraction of light and peculiar sound diffusion. The sculpture's evolving and adaptable qualities echo the concepts of infinity and regeneration, much like the snake, which symbolizes water, creative life force and transformation.



Buloklok

2022

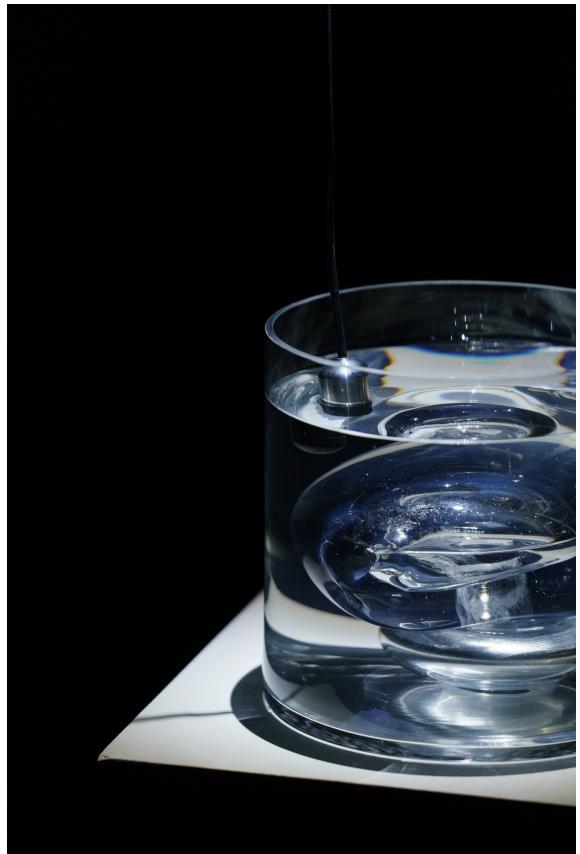
Blown glass, water, glass vase, air pump, tubes, hydrophone, sound system



Buloklok is a sonorous timepiece, assembled with underwater glass sculptures that emit ringing air bubbles. Drawing from the morphology of cowrie shells and their folkloric symbolism, each unique sculpture is blown by a glassblower into an organic, hollowed out form. Each time the upper part of its cavity is filled with air, the emitted bubble produces variant tones, akin to diverse breathing patterns of living bodies. Imagined as a poly-pulsating metronome for rather absurd music, the work articulates the immersive journey of animated spheres, formed and transformed by myriad breaths.

Buloklok joins a series of works created around Sauvage's longtime research of the clepsydra – an ancient water clock, considered to be the oldest time-keeping instrument. The clepsydra's earliest form used water, dripping at a constant rate from a small hole of a vessel, and often involved complex employed water chambers which were connected to automatically sounding objects such as discs, spheres and bells.

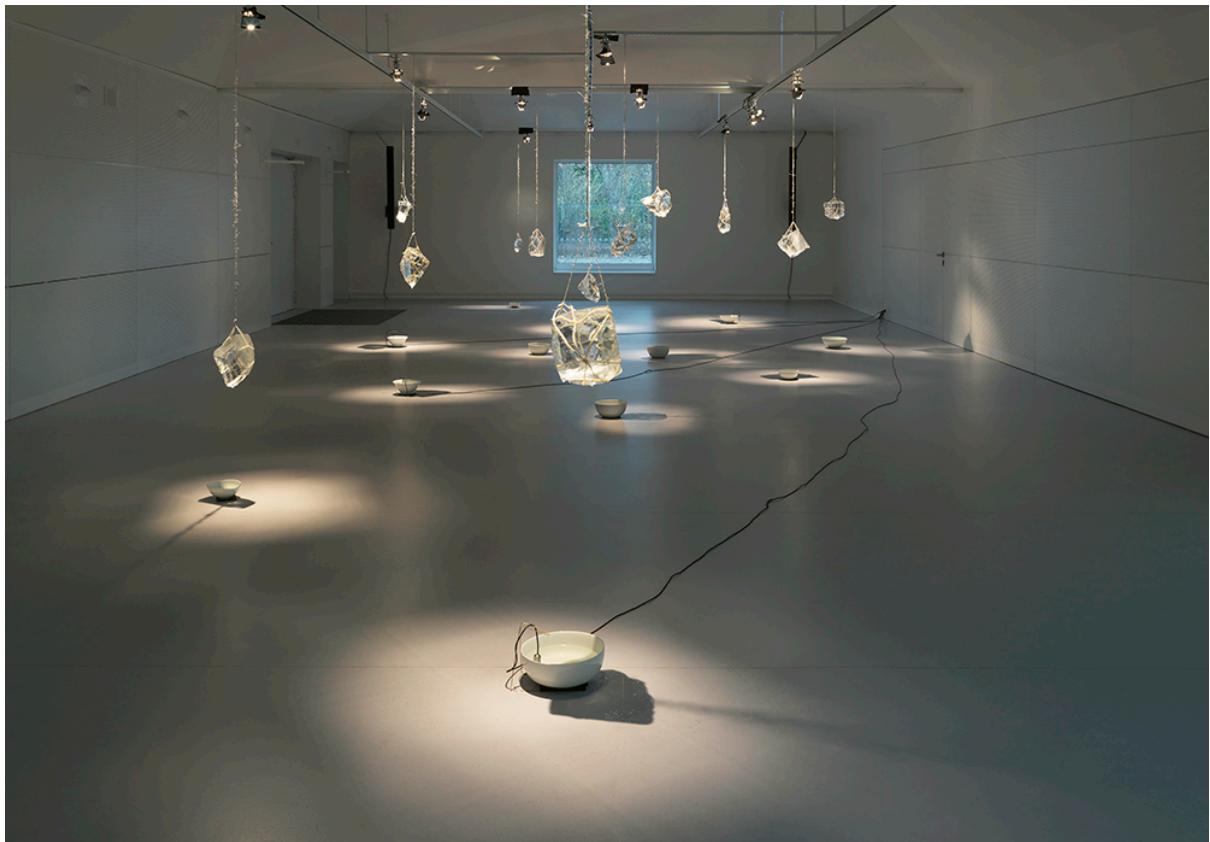
Quite recently in historical terms, widespread dissemination of agriculture and Christianity introduced linear thinking, defining time in hours and minutes, and eroding the elastic perception of time that was perhaps detached from capitalistic ideals and connected to natural rhythms. Sauvage's work prompts us to reconsider this history, urging a shift in priorities. In her work liquid epistemologies come to life with a renewed focus on non-linear, fluid and divergent temporalities and their conceptual capacity for transformative change.



In Curved Water

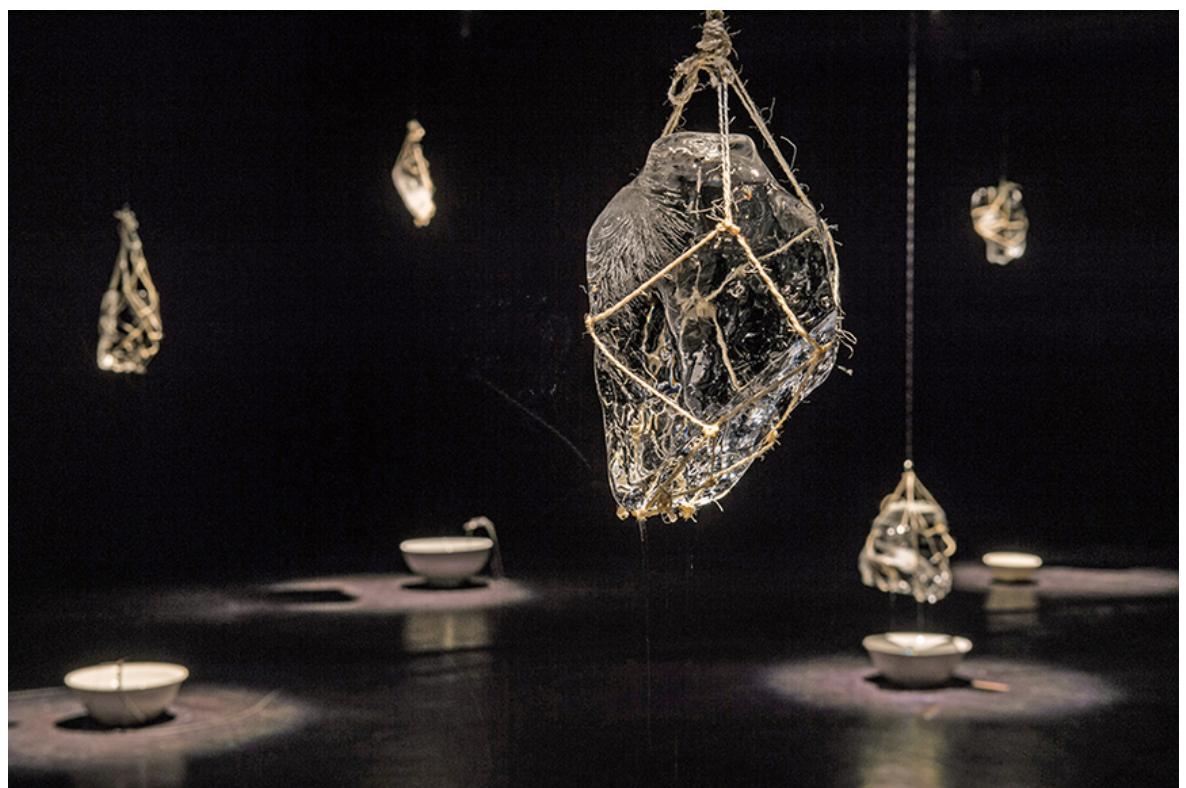
2010

Porcelain bowls, water, ice, sisal ropes, hydrophones, sound system



In Curved Water is a sound installation that has evolved from Sauvage's sound-making technique using water drips within her electro-acoustic instrument, Waterbowls. Ice blocks, tied with knots, suspended in the air, ceaselessly fall water drops, as they melt, into twelve porcelain bowls of water that are partly amplified. Hit by each droplet, the bowls and the water surface vibrate like a percussion. As the tonality is defined by the quantity of water in the bowls, the melodies and harmonies gradually shift with the notes descending drop by drop. The tempo naturally changes depending on the room temperature that affects the speed of meltdown of the ice blocks. The light penetrates and shines the mass of frozen water, resulting in a contemplative, lively and ever-flowing crystal shadow play.

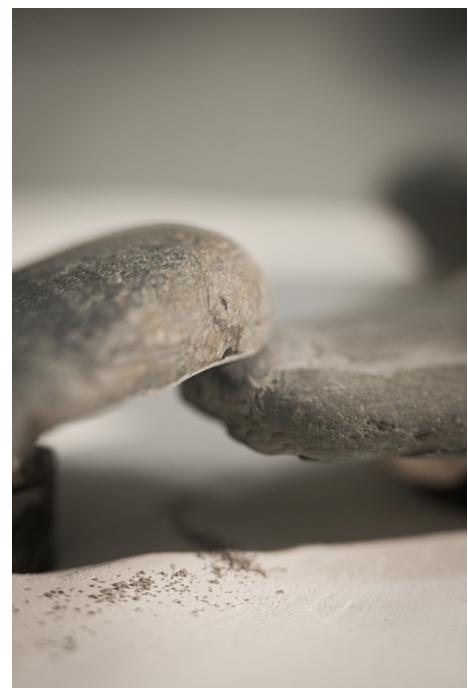




Bonkei Study

2023

Stones, motors, wood, plaster, contact microphone, sound system



Presented in the form of an amplified lithophone for this occasion, Bonkei study is the artist's ongoing research on miniature landscape practices on trays, traditions seen in East Asia (Penjing in China, Hòn Non Bô in Vietnam..). Bonkei Study reflects Sauvage's interest in micro-macrocosm analogy in relation to her metaphorical ways of listening to the sounds of vibrant objects, of stones this time, that are made audible by means of amplifications.

Barrissando

2020

Video, sound



*Barrissando is a fabricated musical term from the french verb, barrir, that signifies cries of an elephant.

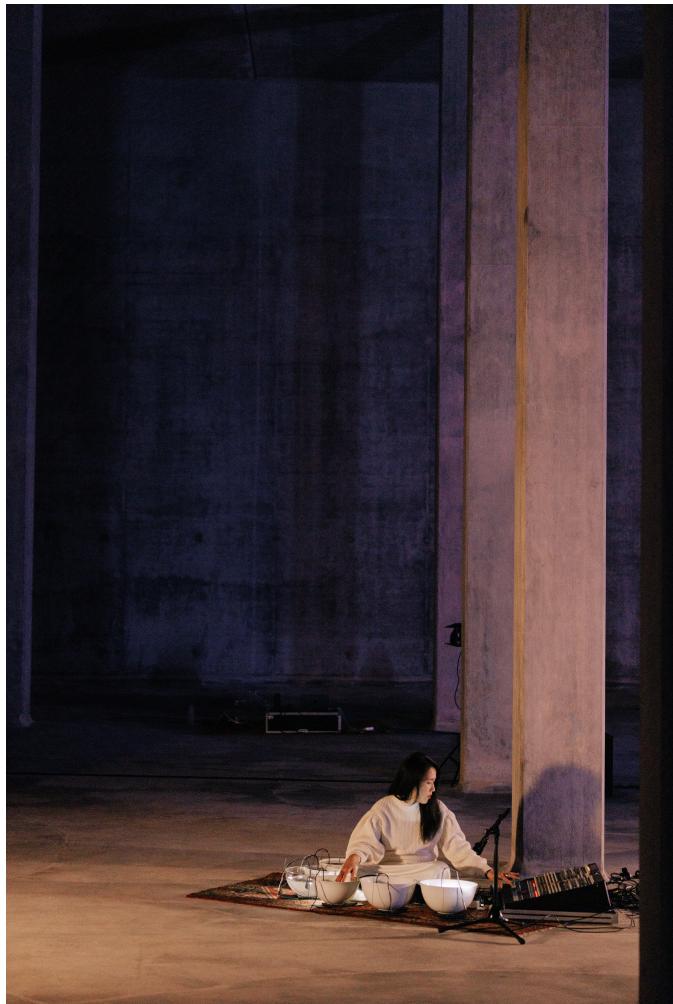
Waterbowls

2006 - present

Porcelain bowls, water, hydrophones, electronics, sonorous objects (performance, compositions, records)



“The creativity and inventiveness of Tomoko Sauvage constitute a subtle alloy of technicality and empiricism. Her electro-aquatic approach proves to be an inexhaustible source of sounds interweaving the injunction of a controlled touch on ceramic containers and a labile result of aqua-echo. Poetic and metaphysical, this staging of sound unfolds like an equation of chance where a liquid component metamorphoses into a voluble sonata.” (By Salima Bouaraour)



Musique Hydromantique

released as LP, CD, digital and streaming by Shelter Press, 2017 [Audio](#)



Musique Hydromantique is the second solo album by Tomoko Sauvage archiving many years of her performance-based practice on the waterbowls – the natural synthesizer of her invention, composed with porcelain bowls filled with water and amplified via hydrophones (underwater microphones). While her first album *Ombrophilia* (released on and/OAR in 2009) was studio-recorded /composed work, *Musique Hydromantique* is about experimentation and improvisation with the environment – acoustics affected by the architecture, temperature, humidity and the human presence.

For more than ten years, Sauvage has been investigating the sound and visual properties of water in different states, as well as those of ceramics, combined with electronics. Water drops, waves and bubbles are some of the elements she has been playing with to generate the fluid timbre. Since around 2010, hydrophonic feedback has been an obsession for the musician – an acoustic phenomenon that requires fine tuning depending on the amount of water, a subtle volume control and interaction with the acoustic space.

Calligraphy was recorded in a genuine echo chamber, with about 10 second reverbs, situated in a former textile factory. Like an endless exercise to draw perfect curves and forms floating in the air, the subaquatic feedback frequencies are pitch-bended with the mass of water sculpted by a hand changing its quantity. *Fortune Biscuit* is about the singing bubbles emitted from the pieces of 'biscuit' (porous terra-cotta). Depending on the texture of the surface, each biscuit makes different sound : insect and animal voices in a forest, motors, crying babies changing pitches and rhythms while absorbing the water... *Clepsydra* (meaning water clock) features Sauvage's classical technique, a random percussion with dripping water. She tunes the waterbowls by adding and removing water, making flowing glissando, to find the balance point in ever-changing tonalities.

Just as the flow of water is subject to a number of variables such as temperature and pressure, water clocks mark a time that is shifting and relative. However, slowness dominates throughout the album as a result of favoring the full resonance of the instrument, leading to a path to experiencing timelessness.

Hydromancy is a method of divination by means of water. Unpredictable bubbles and water ripples become oracles. Evaporation and acoustic space constantly play a chance operation. Through primordial materials and ritualistic yet playful gestures, *Musique Hydromantique* questions contemporary divination.

All the tracks are live-recorded without electronic effects or editing. They were recorded during the night or very early in the morning and the whole album is to be listened to during that period of a day.

“In her work, liquid epistemologies come to life with a renewed focus on non-linear, fluid and divergent temporalities and their conceptual capacity for transformative change. “ – Xenia Benivolski

“Her light touch, calm focus, devotion to chance, and reverently ceremonial performances makes it seem like these curious and magical sounds have always existed (just outside our threshold of hearing) and were patiently waiting millennia for an especially sensitive channeler to turn up and finally bring them to our attention. In some ways that is true, but there is also a great deal of intelligence and ego-less artistry in how they are harnessed and presented here. Musique Hydromantique is a work very much in the tradition of visionary folks like Alvin Lucier and La Monte Young: it is an album that only Sauvage could have made and it is hard to imagine anyone else taking this direction any further, yet this simple, pure, and meditative work is a beguiling self-contained world that reveals a wealth of intriguing new possibilities.” – Anthony D’Amico – Brainwashed

“The wobbly, chiming vessels turn tuned water into a sort of natural synthesizer, complete with organic forms of envelope, modulation, pitchbend and decay. The result is soothing and sensual, like a long hot bath. I could soak in it forever.” by Momus, The WIRE

“Dispositif à fois virtuose et désarmant de simplicité, il a la beauté des choses élémentaires, des choses premières, et évoque une fascination quasi enfantine pour le son de l'eau sous toutes ses formes, la pluie, les vagues, le ressac... La musique qu'en tire Tomoko Sauvage, calme et méditative, appelant, sans jeu de mot, une forme d'immersion.... Il nous replonge dans des situations où notre perception du monde est modifiée, filtrée, par l'élément aquatique.” by Benoit Deuxant, La Sélec

“Tomoko Sauvage se lance dans l'exploration d'un espace sonore où la lenteur invite à l'écoute attentive, presque au recueillement. Son instrument, elle l'élabore elle-même, au fil des expériences. Elle fait vibrer l'eau (dans des bols en porcelaine) et l'air (jeu subtil autour des limites de l'accrochage Larsen).” RTBF