

VALÉRIE DELARUE

*Remains or landscapes in blocks*

Sélection 2000 - 2021







To plunge one's hands into clay is to build and preserve a world of one's own, sheltered from the frenzy of the world around us. It's an animal, carnal act in which the gesture paradoxically speaks of the human. It reveals the question of the body and its impact on clay. The supple material I stretch under my fingers becomes skin, bone structure, an invisible, subterranean universe of tendons and muscles. It's fragile and ephemeral, but I walk through it as I walk along a path that smells of peat and envelops me. Sometimes I bury parts of my body in it: contact with matter is a way of being in the world, whatever the cost.

Valérie DELARUE, 2012







## FRESH CLAY, RECEPTACLE OF THE BODY'S ENERGY

The video-performance CORPS AU TRAVAIL (BODY AT WORK), produced at the Cité de la Céramique in 2010 during a residency, is the artist's manifesto for her physical and sensory engagement with clay, an attempt at fusion with the material. It's a landscape on the scale of her body. In her CORPS AU TRAVAIL project at Sèvres, her entire body becomes a sculptor's "tool", from the tips of her toes to the ends of her hair. In a storage silo in the mill workshop (where the various pastes are made), Valérie DELARUE built a "sculpting space" consisting of three walls of soft earth raised to human scale (each wall measuring 2 × 1.70 m). The high-energy choreographic performance was filmed throughout the creation of this CHAMBRE D'ARGILE. A version of the video BODY AT WORK was shown as part of the exhibition Body & Soul, new international ceramics, at the Museum of Art and Design in New York in 2014.

Frédéric BODET, 2015

(Exhibition curator, specialist in contemporary ceramics - MAD & City of Sèvres ceramics - Limoges)





THE CLAY CHAMBER has been deconstructed. Dismantled into several blocks, this installation inaugurates the series entitled "REMAINS". Sometimes reworked, the various pieces or blocks removed make up a spatially fragmented installation. It becomes a new axis in my work : that of constructing a form in several pieces and being able to deconstruct it.



SOUBASSEMENT, 2012 - Block from LA  
CHAMBRE D'ARGILE, clay fired in the Sèvres  
ovens -110×180×50cm  
© A. Girardi





## A CERAMIC MOUNTAIN

From mineral to living

Having our hands in clay fosters a special relationship with the world, because the material earth is the essence of humanity. It's where we come from, and it invites us to reconnect with our relationship as "earthlings". Taking clay in our hands is a vital need, and brings out new senses, intuition and animality. This act is a way to re-enchanting the world, and it's precisely through this act and its transmission that I feel connected to the living. Following in the footsteps of Bernard PALISSY, my intimate knowledge of the technical subtleties of the ceramic medium enables me to bring life to the surface, where mineral, plant and animal forms can merge.







### BABEL, a frustration

The video-performance entitled CORPS AU TRAVAIL, produced in 2010 during a residency at the Cité de la Céramique, gave rise to the frustration of not being able to remember the 63 blocks of stoneware that made up THE CLAY CHAMBER, produced on that occasion. Unable to circumscribe all these pieces in their VESTIGES state, it became important to me to study a system of nesting. This project has become a new and essential approach in my work as a sculptor. The idea of constructing a form in several blocks and being able to deconstruct it allows me to deploy it in space. It questions the notion of interiority and reveals the mystery of what we can't see.





BABEL becomes a formal abstraction that develops like a game. Building it is a performance. Carrying the ceramic blocks and arranging them with each other is a physical encounter with the material. MERCIER & ASSOCIATES Gallery © Élise FOLLIOT





8, 9, 10 & 11 - BABEL, 2013 - glazed terracotta - 110 x 90 x 60 cm © Élise FOLLIO (Private collection )



My ceramic sculptures are often accompanied by pastel drawings. In these I reinterpret the universe of scattered blocks offered to me by deconstructed and endangered sculpture. They become bodies, archaeological sites that reveal imaginary landscapes. Like clay, pastel can be shaped by the hand and leave its mark. It's a silky material, pleasant to the touch and radiant to the eye. When I caress it with my fingers, I think of flower pollen.

BLOCKS FROM BABEL, 2014 – Pastel drawing on paper paper dyed with coffee and ink - 110 x 90 cm  
(Private collection)







Walkway, 2016 – Glazed terracotta - 21/45/32 cm . Basement whose origin comes from « BABEL »





HANGING BLACK LANDSCAPE, 2013 - 3 pièces – Glazed terracotta 60 X 50 X 26 cm  
(Artist collection)







DAWN, 1999 Pastel drawing on paper colored with ink - 50 X 65 cm  
(Private collection)





HANGING WHITE LANDSCAPE, 2013 - Glazed terracotta 63 X 53 X 26 cm  
(Artist collection)





BLOCKS FROM FEAST OF THE WOLF, 2018 - Pastel drawing on colored paper with ink and coffee - 50 X 75 cm (Artist collection)











## THE WOLF FEAST

On the occasion of an exhibition-residency in 2016 for the September event of ceramics and glass in Les Baux-de-Provence, and at the suggestion of exhibition curator Sylvie CARON, THE WOLF FEAST was conceived as a centerpiece. A free interpretation of the Provençal tale, it's an assemblage of 46 glazed stoneware pieces, imprinted with the mineral landscape of Les Baux-de-Provence.



<https://youtu.be/rSxgAt2DAog>





THE WOLF FEAST - 2017 Assembly of 46 glazed stoneware blocks, 55 x 60 x 130 cm © Sophie SEAR (collection of National Ceramic Museum in Sèvres)



## BÉRENGÈRE

Her latest major work is a majestic "neo-feudal ruin" aptly entitled *Bérenère*, in homage to Richard the Lionheart's wife, dowager of Le Mans. This extravagant sculpture is a two meters high fragmented « monument », an idea of a mausoleum scaffolded like a bastion of stone and leather, sand and viscera mingled together, a fragile, gnawed cathedral, yet as unshakable and raw as a bunker... From its thick cinder-block foundations (reminiscent of the concrete of modern rationalists, in their obsession with the minimal logic of "boxes") to the Piranesian slings of medieval watchtowers, Romanesque counter-forts or flamboyant pinnacles, the most eclectic forms of architectural grammar harmonize astonishingly with the ever-felt armature of the human body, its skeleton and flesh, in all its nervousness and defiance of finitude. An unsettling yet crystal-clear undertaking to reconcile stone and skin.

Frederic Bodet

*Extract from the text written in December 2018 for Valérie Delarue's monographic exhibition called « De pierre et de peau », Mercier & Associés gallery - From December 13 to February 2, 2019.*

BÉRENGÈRE, 2018, glazed stoneware  
214/110/74 cm - 42 pièces assembled















BÉRENGÈRE, 2018 - Pastel drawing on colored paper  
with ink and coffee – 120 x 160 cm (Artist collection)

22 - DE PIERRE ET DE PEAU, Solo show at the Gallery  
MERCIER & ASSOCIÉS, Paris 2018 - 2019

© Christian BOURDEAU



## BLOCK LANDSCAPES

A process, the ability to interlock blocks to build and deconstruct a form



BLOCKS 3, 2021 – Glazed stoneware 9 X 23 X 25 cm (Private collection)





ON THE SLOPE, 2020 – Pastel drawing on paper colored with ink and coffee - 50 x 65 cm (Private collection)



OLIVE'S GARDEN, 2016 - Low relief glazed stoneware - 50 x 80 x 11 cm  
Free interprétation of Andrea MANTEGNA'S painting « LE CHRIST AU JARDIN  
DES OLIVIERS » Fine Arts Museum of TOURS  
(Collection of the Fine Arts Museum of Le MANS)







FALLS (The déluge) , 2001 Série of 10 watercolorrs mounted on galvanized métal - 10 / 75 x 60 cm (Artist collection)





FALLS (The déluge), 2001

Studio installation (10 watercolors in front of 6 ceramics gardens)





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