

LE SHED

CENTRE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN DE NORMANDIE

SITE DE L'ACADÉMIE

From May 5 to July 14, 2024

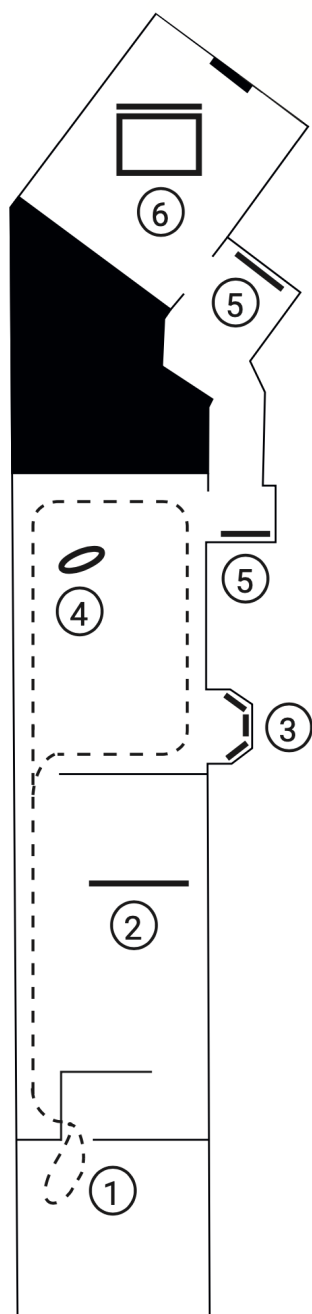
Free admission on Wednesday,
Saturday and Sunday

from 2 pm to 6 pm and on request

RONDES DE NUIT¹

GÉRALDINE PY

ROBERTO VERDE



- ① **Robot vigile², 2024**
Line following robot, black tape lines, tiles.
- ② **Train de nuit³, 2017**
Full HD video, 5.1 sound, duration: 14'54"
- ③ **Salle de contrôle⁴, 2024**
4 CCTV screens, line following robots.
- ④ **Tunnel, 2024**
Full HD video, duration: 7'54"
- ⑤ **Montée des eaux⁵, 2024**
Video projectors, two videos (durations: 27'59" and 28'21")
- ⑥ **Radeau⁶, 2023**
Video device, HD video screening (duration: 2'47"), video monitor, HD video (duration: 1'40"), pool, stereo sound

AS A PART OF THE FESTIVAL

 NORMANDIE
IMPRESSIONNISTE

In Le SHED – Académie’s adjoining rooms, specially set into darkness, Géraldine Py and Roberto Verde show 5 video devices and an installation. As indicated in the exhibition’s title, what matters here is circulation, sight and the relationship between existing spaces and fiction.

The film they are working on may have something to do with it⁷: when preparing this show, Géraldine and Roberto’s first move was to consider it as an exploration. Here, it could be understood both as the act of wandering and the discovery of a territory⁸: exploring the place itself, the artists indeed wandered through it and documented it: their exhibition can be seen as a means of sharing the knowledge they collected on this particular territory; at the same time, we, as visitors, are encouraged to explore it as well, as a space made “unknown or uncharted” whose features should be “characterized”.

It is tempting to interpret the two robots cruising the exhibition space as a metaphor of exploration: we could walk through the show as a robot, just as Vinciane Despret invites us to consider *living as a bird*⁹. And, indeed, the robots display some zones of the building that are usually inaccessible, like the SHED’s office where its team works or the disused last floor (*Salle de contrôle*, 2024).

At second glance, however, we realise that the robots do not really act as explorers: compliant, they simply follow a black line, closed in a loop. Patrolling in the dark, they *inspect* rather than explore. Defined as “the action of looking”, the term “inspection” gives no promise of exoticism, yet it refers explicitly to seeing as an *action*.

The action of looking thus pervades the artists’ proposal, as the robots’ camera methodically scan the building. Preparing their show, Géraldine and Roberto had thought of making a huge periscope, scaled to the building: we could have watched the sky from within the obscured exhibition space, thanks to a complex system of mirrors. If the periscope never came to life (at least not here), Géraldine and Roberto did conceive their exhibition as a circulation of gaze and reflecting images. They explicitly played with the idea in the *Salle de contrôle’s mise en abyme* where we can look at the robot watching us watching the screen where we can see ourselves, etc. *Radeau* provides a similar impression as it combines shifting points of view, reflections and reverse angles.

In the same way, recurring characters, objects or figures appear in one place or artwork *and* another, in

reality and as images: for example, the circular shape of underground tunnels evokes the video-projector lenses; machine casings echo the cardboard box moving along in *Train de nuit*; the shadow cast on the walkway above the first room recalls the conveyor belts of the warehouse, roamed throughout the film.

If we wanted to, we could almost wonder what we are actually seeing: is the night train also going through the rooms in the upper part of the Académie? Who or what is living on the third floor while we walk through the show? But these questions remain speculative. Indeed, the play on reflections do not aim at creating illusion as much as they make reality and fiction coexist in an undetermined space: just as the screenings of floods invading a tunnel extend the one we are really going through (*Inondations*, 2024).

This undetermined space could be that of art: a potential space, where machines’ and humans’ points of view converse. Nothing candid or mystical: Géraldine and Roberto insist on considering the robots as other-than-humans. But by letting us perceive what machines “see” through their “eyes”, the artists open the possibility of a point of view other than theirs. Or other than ours: have you never wondered what others see?

Julie Faitot,
mai 2024

(translation : Anne-Sarah Sanchez,
proofreading : Julie Faitot)

1. Night shifts.

2. Security guard robot.

3. Night train.

4. Control room.

5. Rising waters.

6. Raft.

7. For the past 2 years, Géraldine Py & Roberto Verde have

been working on a film in constant progress: it is based on the proliferation of rats in our cities which led them to explore the sewage system of their home town as well as to meet sewage workers, anthropologists, trapping robots and, up until now, surprisingly few rats.

8. “The act of wandering through an unknown or uncharted territory in an attempt to find its characteristics and to gather scientific, economic information.”

9. Translated as Bird Watching or more literally Living like a Bird,

Habiter en oiseau is a beautiful book by Vinciane Despret about epistemology, that is the (anthropomorphic and authoritative) methods with which scientific knowledge was constructed (notably about birds) and about other (possible) ways to consider and document animal life, including cohabitation and empathy as factors rather than obstacles to knowledge.