BLOW FIROZABAD BANGLES
An exhibition by François Daireaux
25 October 2017 – 11 February 2018

PRESS KIT
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Lausanne, September 2017

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PRESS CONFERENCE: TUESDAY 24 OCTOBER AT 9.00
IN THE PRESENCE OF FRANÇOIS DAIREAUX

Please confirm your attendance to the press conference by 18 October

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HD VISUALS
https://mudac.ch/presse/
Password: presse2017

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Curators: Amélie Bannwart, curators of the contemporary glass art collection, and Jessica Dieffenbacher, art historian

Blow Firozabad Bangles

François Daireaux’s Blow Firozabad Bangles exhibition is the result of the artist’s many comings and goings between the glassmaking cities of Firozabad in India and Meisenthal in Moselle (France). Firozabad is a working-class city in the north of India whose main activity for several centuries has revolved around manufacturing glass and more specifically glass bracelets, or bangles, worn by Indian women. These bangles are manufactured daily by the millions in the hundreds of glassworks spread throughout the city. Virtually all of the city’s 600,000 residents work in the glass industry with infernal production rates and in conditions that are often extremely harsh.

For two years running, the artist visited the glassmaking city of Firozabad, taking pictures, filming and carrying out the inventory of an entire production which he then relocated by exporting it to the International Centre for Glass Art (CIAV) in Meisenthal. A collection of 404 toras – clusters of entwined bangles – was then blown in moulds kept intact by the CIAV after the successive closure of many Lorraine glassworks, leading to the Blow Bangles installation, featuring 404 glass ‘imprints’ mouth-blown by Meisenthal’s glassblowers. At the mudac the ‘imprints’ are all arranged on a stand around which visitors can walk before entering a dark room where the film Firozabad is screened.

The project touches on broad issues that are more topical than ever, i.e. the globalisation of mass production, working conditions to produce objects sold at low prices in the West, and the flow of goods and, through them, of cultures. By moving, transforming and recreating objects, François Daireaux fosters new exchanges with different modalities. He brings together distant cultures that share a glass manufacturing tradition and that are both facing local production crises, i.e. the closure of French factories due to relocation and the inhumane working conditions of mass glass manufacturing in India. The ‘imprints’ resulting from the fusion of their respective techniques invite the public to reflect on our globalised lifestyles, while the film brings us face-to-face with the stark reality of Firozabad.

About François Daireaux

Journeying into the unknown, such is the choice of artist François Daireaux who is ceaselessly gauging the world’s heartbeat, blood pressure and pulse; its rhythm, arrhythmia and pauses; its silences and commotions. On the lookout for potential contact points, on a quest for sounds, moving and still pictures that are committed to memory thanks to his recording devices (digital and film camera and sound recorder), François Daireaux goes in search of unique places in the world and his footsteps regularly take him where people live and work. Away from tourist destinations and any form of exoticism, he has been travelling alone to countries he does not know for the last 25 years, to draw his own experiences.

Thus he creates a vocabulary for his own work, which may be viewed as an extension of sculpture, including the way in which he constructs photographic images and films. He works as a gleaner of shapes, situations and images, exercising his gaze in a tenacious and solitary way. He burrows for and sculpts layers of reality, obsessed by actions and the subsequent transformations they trigger in physical matter as well as the social sphere. In the last few years, the artist’s photographic and film work has intensified to assert a visual work whose outlines and commitments are now understood, as much in terms of questioning the alienation of bodies as in a sensitive approach of the urban entropy of emerging countries.
Excerpts from texts about François Daireaux

Excerpt from *Le monde est une sculpture qui s’ignore* (*The world is a sculpture unbeknownst to itself*) by Alexandrine Dhainaut, art critic and curator of exhibitions

‘By melting a tora, François Daireaux reverts the manufactured involution of bracelets in order to re-compact matter. However, although the new imprints thus created evoke a notion of absence, of loss of initial form, they are nevertheless ambiguous: each imprint, a sort of “false-bottomed drawer”, has both a visible and a hidden facet. Under the guise of a design object, the imprint carries in itself the trace of the event that wiped out its base material (melting a tora and blowing into a mould, string included) as a self-contained form, while still showing glimpses of the clustered bangles, as if fossilised in the new object, frozen in their bath.

The fusion of one product into another, or rather of one material into another, the dissipation of the energy that spawned it, is extremely violent – all the more so as the 64-minute film dissects the stages, meticulous gestures and many working hours that a tora requires. The political dimension of the project lies in this very violence. Already in his Firozabad video, which features workers squatting in front of the “grindstones of necessity” with their rudimentary tools, gathering glass by hand and breathing the fumes of the plastic soles they collect and burn, François Daireaux shows the harsh working conditions and the huge gap between the living conditions of the workers and the public for whom these objects are carefully manufactured (i.e. “made by hand” in the true sense of the word). However, he pushes his political considerations even further in the sculptural dimension of the 404 imprints. There is no inherent message but it is implied in the creative process itself. To produce this series, the artist went through the usual channels of trade, himself becoming an actor of globalisation (knowing that over half of Firozabad’s glass production is exported abroad) by purchasing as many toras as there are shades of bangles from Firozabi merchants, filling a full container and shipping it to Meisenthal. This age-old, local handicraft, whose manufacturing process he analysed for several months, becomes a deterritorialised object, relocated to France. François Daireaux re-enacts the process of exchange, migration and networking, intertwining the economy and culture peculiar to globalisation. A globalisation that is at the root of the glass industry’s very beginnings in Firozabad, imported by the successive invaders who exported many glass objects to India, some of which were then recycled by Firozabi artisans to produce bangles. François Daireaux explores the oh-so-topical contradiction between the local and the global. Here however, he – physically – confronts the local with the global, filtering a city’s know-how through the moulds of another to explore the effects of the global: On one hand, a local glass industry whose production is wildly excessive, caught in the grinding machine of world trade; on the other, another local glass industry that manages to survive, while inevitably pointing to its domestic industrial crisis and the few glassworks still open in France which work twice as hard in the face of global competition, in particular from India. The production of the 404 imprints stems from a purely sculptural process, governed by the founding principles of sculpture, i.e. transforming and altering a material (an entire production here) to give it a new shape. Yet here it is viewed on a global scale, which is precisely what makes this work so interesting.’

Excerpt from *L’interrupteur imprévu* (*The unexpected interrupter*) by Séverine Cauchy, artist

‘For many months, François Daireaux roamed the city. With a keen and meticulous gaze, he filmed the inner workings of glassworks as well as the scenes and the visual and sound occurrences that struck him in the surrounding landscapes. With his camera, in direct contact with the workers, he immersed himself in this extremely brutal and yet at times sensual reality, of which he gives a successful account in his eponymous film. The editing enables the artist to bring into play one of his main concerns: ‘As soon as the semblance of a story begins to take hold, it is shattered and the following shot plunges the viewer into a radically different scene… Alternating between close-ups and wide shots, his moving images are chunks of time captured at different time intervals. Stopping at length on a steady gaze, close-up and full frame, capturing a form sweeping across the frame without giving us the time to identify it clearly, François Daireaux plays on our need to grasp what is unfolding before our eyes…’"
Blow Bangles, Ensemble of 404 blown glass imprints, atelier view © Guy Rebmeister, 2012
Firozabad, 2013, film colour, sound, no dialogue, 64’ © François Daireaux - Firozabad, 2013
Useful information

Press conference  Tuesday 24 October 2017 at 9.00

Opening  Tuesday 24 October 2017 at 18.00, together with Musée de l’Élysée

Exhibition dates  October 25, 2017 – February 11, 2018

Guided tours  Tuesday November 14, 2017 at 12.15
Saturday January 27 at 4pm
Price included in the ticket

Workshops  Un atelier haut en couleurs!
Workshop for children aged 8-13
Saturday 11 November 2017 from 14.00 to 16.00
Wednesday 13 December from 14.00 to 16.00
Wednesday 7 February from 14.00 to 16.00
Saturday 10 February from 14.00 to 16.00

Voyages, voyages…
Family workshop
Sunday 12 November from 14.00 to 16.30
Sunday 11 February from 14.00 to 16.30

Price: CHF 10.-
Inscription: inscription@mudac.ch or 021 315 25 30

Opening times  Tue-Sun 11h-18h
Open on bank holidays, Mondays included
Open until 4pm on December 24 and 31
Closed on December 25 and January 1st
Free entry on 1st Monday of the month

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