



UNIVERSITY MUSEUM
OF CONTEMPORARY ART
University of Massachusetts Amherst

NEWS RELEASE

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Céleste Boursier-Mougenot

October 4 – December 2, 2012

Opening Reception: Wednesday, October 3, 5:00 – 7:30PM

Critic and theorist of art and music, Christoph Cox, along with Multi-media artist Joshua Selman, will conduct an informal conversation with the artist during the opening reception.

The University Museum of Contemporary Art (UMCA) is pleased to announce a solo exhibition of work by **Céleste Boursier-Mougenot**, the internationally acclaimed French artist whose innovative work merges the realms of the musical and the visual. The exhibition will be on view from October 4th through December 2nd, 2012, with an Opening Reception for the artist on Wednesday, October 3rd, 5:00 – 7:30pm.

Although exhibiting his work for more than twenty years in a contemporary visual art context, Boursier-Mougenot's work is also understood as that of a musician and composer. Using various unexpected objects from which he extracts a musical potential, Boursier-Mougenot creates situations where sonic events take on visual form, or conversely where visual information is expressed acoustically. Calling on ideas about technological production, language, chance operations, and systems of translation, Boursier-Mougenot's work merges multi-sensory phenomena with a cerebral investigation of the mechanisms of sight and sound in his given situations.

“As an installation's sound and its appearance are for me completely intertwined and interdependent,” the artist has said, “it is not a question of putting a sound object on display, but rather to show the unfolding of a whole system, without concealing its materiality and in such a way so as the visitor can grasp all the factors at work. It is the visitors' presence and their own experience of apprehending my works which gives the works meaning. This can give rise to a scenography in motion....”

Included in this exhibition is the artist's impressive sound installation, ***indexes (v. 1) (2012)***. A grand piano is rigged to play in response to a live internet feed of stock market data from business news and financial information websites around the world. In this work the artist reconfigures a traditional musical instrument by inserting a software system of his own design, much as John Cage did decades earlier with his prepared piano compositions. The software that Boursier-Mougenot wrote links linguistic properties to musical properties, translating letters and phrases into pitch, repetition, and chords. Acting as conductor, composer, and instrumentalist all at once, the piece renders an in situ musical phenomenon that registers the daily activity of the stock market and plays it in song.

Also on view will be other major works by the artist such as *“virus”*, *“solidvideo”*, and *“zombiedrones”*. These works, which go beyond the creation of sound installations, transpose the principles of feed-back and “translation” of media. Although sound is still present, the resulting images are not necessarily purely sound-based. What ties all these works together are certain systems the artist sets in motion and then allows to autonomously exist and evolve. Arising out of this impermanence is a certain muted and ever-changing beauty. In conjunction with this exhibition, an interview that was conducted this summer between Céleste Boursier-Mougenot and Christoph Cox will be published and available to visitors.

A native of Nice, Céleste Boursier-Mougenot was born in 1961 and currently lives and works in Sète, France. His work has been exhibited in venues such as the capcMusée, Bordeaux, France (1997); the ITT InterCommunication Center, Tokyo (2000); the Herzliya Museum of Art, Israel (2001); Pinacoteca Sao Paulo, Brazil (2009); Musée Chagall, Nice (2009); and the Henry Art Gallery, Seattle (2010); and in the group exhibition *Notations: The Cage Effect Today* at Hunter College Art Gallery in NYC (2012); Boursier-Mougenot presented solo exhibitions at the Barbican Center in London, the Queensland Art Gallery in Australia, PS1 (MoMA), NYC, and FRAC Champagne-Ardenne in Reims, France. He recently took part in the 3rd Moscow Biennale and was a nominee of the Marcel Duchamp Prize (2010).

His work is in major public and private collections around the world, including the Israel Museum, Jerusalem; the San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art, La Jolla, CA; the Centre Pompidou, Paris; the Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Paris; MONA (Hobart, Tasmania); the Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia; and La Maison Rouge, Paris.

Related special event and screening in conjunction with the exhibition:

In Conversation: Céleste Boursier-Mougenot with Christoph Cox and Joshua Selman

Wednesday, October 3rd, 6:00 – 6:45pm

Fine Arts Center Lobby

Christoph Cox is a critic, theorist, and curator of art and music. He is Professor of Philosophy at Hampshire College where he teaches and writes on contemporary European philosophy and contemporary art and music. He is also on the faculty at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College. He is currently at work on a philosophical and historical book about sound art and experimental music.

Joshua Selman is a noted multi-media artist who works in Easthampton, MA, and NYC. He practices public space intervention, critical journalism, and applied new media. He has made major works in sound and has worked extensively with Fluxus Founders.

les oiseaux de Céleste, film screening

Thursday, October 4th, 6:00PM

Bezanson Recital Hall, Fine Arts Center

This film, produced by Céleste Boursier-Mougenot and Ariane Michel on the memorable sound installation *From Here to Ear (1999)*, takes the form of a walk-through aviary for a flock of zebra finches, furnished with electric guitars and other instruments and objects. As the birds go about their routine activities, perching on or feeding from the various pieces of equipment, they create a captivating live soundscape, an acoustical structure whose form was determined by the behavioral patterns of the birds.

Following the screening, Céleste Boursier-Mougenot will discuss this project with UMass professors Luke Remage-Healey, Salvatore Macchia, and Jeffrey Podos.

Luke Remage-Healey is Associate Professor of Psychology. His research is focused on the neural basis of natural behavior, using songbirds as a research model of vocal learning and brain function. **Salvatore Macchia** is Professor of Music. He has performed in the European and jazz traditions throughout the U.S. and Europe, and has premiered nearly 100 compositions featuring the doublebass. **Jeff Podos** is Professor of Biology. His work focuses on vocal behavior and evolution in vertebrates, especially songbirds.

Acknowledgements:

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Céleste Boursier-Mougenot would like to thank Les Pianos Pleyel for its collaboration on indexes. The manufacturers of exclusive pianos in Paris since 1807, Les Pianos Pleyel are proud to have partnered with Céleste Boursier Mougenot as they continue to support musical and artistic creation.