SHIMABUKU, The 165-metre Mermaid and Other Stories

by Michel Gathier

>> MONTE-CARLO Would sociology have taken over art or has art been renewed by taking into account the social dimension it implies? "Art is a state of encounter," wrote Nicolas Bourriaud, and the relational aesthetics he claimed is particularly sensitive in this exhibition of Shimabuku's work. The Japanese artist, born in 1969, excels at sharing through the atomization of the notion of the artist, through the intervention of the public in the creative process, as, for example, when fifth-grade students become involved in the elaboration of the work by producing "a mermaid museum" in a room at the Villa Paloma.

Or when he associates a number of actors, craftsmen or fishermen with the deployment of all media through writing or performance. He nevertheless moves away from an overly arid sociological schema by erecting fiction, storytelling and poetry as a place of interaction between him and the public. At the beginning, therefore, a journey based on the story of a 165-metre long mermaid and Shimabuku writes: “During this journey, I asked different people to make an object related to the mermaid, to develop and enrich her story”. The thread of the story then unwinds between gravity and humour where the human being is confronted with all forms of the living and the imaginary. It opens up to innumerable digressions, so much so that we will meet an octopus and a pigeon, a flower on the sea, stars and potatoes. As we move from one work to the next, we think that humanity overflows from the reign of the human being to take charge of this invisible world that is imbued with our hopes, dreams and all those little everyday things in which the individual blends in.

For Shimabuku, art is this means to reintroduce harmony between man and the universe, laws, chance, contingency... In a digital film “Eriger”, with other speakers, he places things lying on a beach, tree debris and stones, vertically. And he writes: “Then maybe something in our hearts will rise up”. No doubt art is here to give shape beyond all identity. And to define itself as an experiment rather than a productive process. But above all it reveals new potentialities in us and if the “I” of the artist is the guiding thread of this beautiful wandering, it dissolves in the collective energy, the informal voice of life.

Curator, artist and public, everything is connected and Shimabuku shows us with humility that there is only this link in the chain of the living.

09 Mar 2021
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