

## SOPHIE RISTELHUEBER

(FR, born 1949. Lives and works in Paris, France)

Sophie Ristelhueber was one of the first artists to make a reflection on territory and its history, memory and scars through photography. For over thirty years, she has developed a unique approach to the ruins and traces left by mankind in those places devastated by war or by natural and cultural upheaval. As Jacques Rancière wrote about her work in *The Emancipated Spectator*, “she photographs not the emblem of the war but the wounds and the scars that war stamps on a territory”. She renders visible those veritable memories of the “acts” of history.

If she essentially turns to photography in her work, Sophie Ristelhueber utilizes her shooting to create full plastic works, playing with the material and the format of the image, its status, framework and installation in space (photographs, posters, photo-installations, films, artists' books, etc.).

Her work has been exhibited in numerous international institutions, among which MoMA (New York, US), Museum of Fine Arts (Boston, US), Albright-Knox Art Gallery (Buffalo, US), National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa, CA), The

Power Plant (Toronto, CA), Tate Modern (London, GB), Imperial War Museum (London, GB), ZKM (Karlsruhe, DEU), Folkwang Museum (Essen, DEU), MAMCO (Geneva, CH), biennials of Johannesburg, Sao Paulo, Triennial of Etchigo-Tsumari, Krakow Photomonth Festival (Cracovie, PL), Rencontres Photographiques d'Arles, and in Paris, MNAM – Centre Georges-Pompidou, Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume, Musée Zadkine, Musée Rodin ...

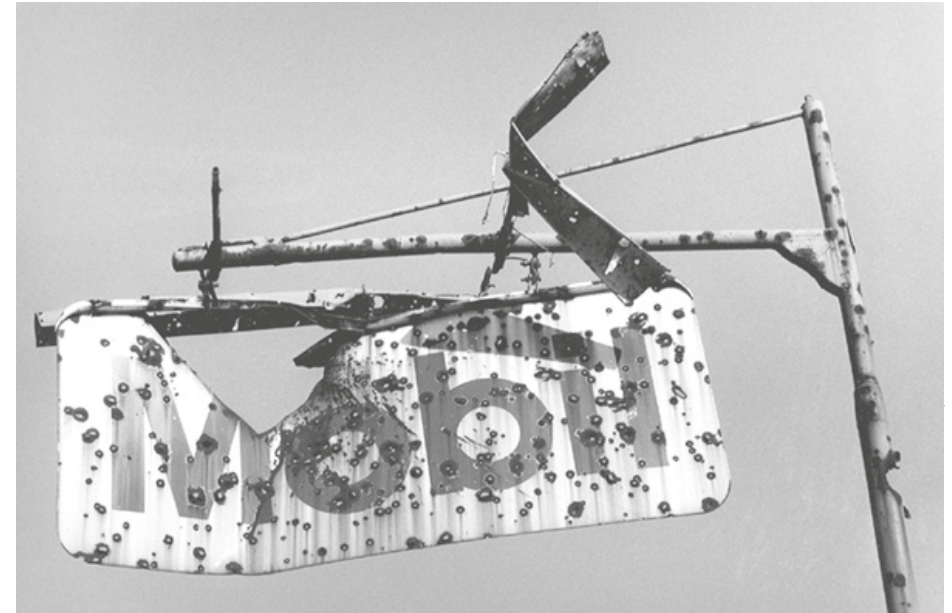
Sophie Ristelhueber's artworks are kept in many public collections among which Museum of Fine Art (Boston, US), Albright-Knox Art Gallery (US), National Gallery of Canada (Ottawa, CA), MNAM – Centre Georges-Pompidou (Paris, FR), Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, (Paris, FR), Victoria & Albert Museum (Londres, GB), Maison Européenne de la Photographie (Paris, FR), Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris, FR), Fonds National d'Art Contemporain (FR) and different Fonds Régionaux d'Art Contemporain (Bretagne, Haute Normandie, Basse Normandie, Corse, PACA).



Exhibition view at Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, 1996

## GALERIE | JEROME POGGI

ARMORY SHOW - Booth #106



Beyrouth, photographs, 1984 - Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris

## SOPHIE RISTELHUEBER

For its second participation to The Armory Show, the gallery Jérôme Poggi is devoting a monographic project to Sophie Ristelhueber, one of the major figures of contemporary art whose work has marked the history of photography since the 1980s. Focusing on so-called «wounded» landscape as Jacques Rancière wrote, mainly related to the cradle of our universal history in the Middle East, the booth gathers some of the most iconic works of Ristelhueber, including some very singular vintage photos from her founding series made in Beyrouth in the early 1980's, as well as some of her most recent works.

Widely renowned in Europe, where she was awarded with the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize (2010) after her acclaimed retrospective at Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume in Paris, Ristelhueber has already conquered a large audience in the United States and Canada since her first presentation at MoMA (1997), followed by an important solo show at Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo (1998), her retrospective exhibition at Museum of Fine Arts of Boston (2001-2002), and lately at Pratt Institute in New York (2016).

Since her exhibition at Power Plant in Toronto (1999), the National Gallery of Canada has extensively supported her work by recently purchasing her entire historic *Fait* series which was on show along 2015 in Ottawa and London (Tate Modern).

### BEYROUTH, PHOTOGRAPHS (1984)

Black and white print, 50 x 60 cm  
Edition 5 ex.

This series of 31 black and white photographs is the founding project for Sophie Ristelhueber's work.

During the civil war, the artist left for Beirut in 1982 with the idea of making a work based on the modern city in ruins. Even if she used the means and took risks, Sophie Ristelhueber found herself at that time to be at the opposite of the photojournalism's logic. It was a matter of photographing rather than documenting. Sophie Ristelhueber shot contemporary ruins with no human presence, voluntarily avoiding any kind of romanticism. This work was based on the domain of history, and not on that of current events, which in turn put into perspective the ruins of modernity and those of Antiquity.

Sophie Ristelhueber issued these 31 photographs in an artist's book published by Hazan (Paris, FR) and Thames & Hudson Ltd (London, UK) in 1984, for which she chose as an introduction a text by Lucretia on earthquakes. This series is conserved within the collections of the Cabinet des Estampes de Genève and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

### ARMENIA (1989)

Silver colour print, 50 x 60 cm  
Edition 3 ex.

After having participated in the famous Datar's Photographic Mission of the in 1984-1987, Sophie Ristelhueber was invited in 1989 within the context of a twinning between French and Soviet cities. She was proposed to photograph Armenia that had just been rocked by a major earthquake. For the first time, Ristelhueber presented photographs in colour of a modern but nevertheless timeless architecture in ruins.

"There, within the circle of the earthquake, among the cities of Kirovakan, Spitak and Leninakan, I wanted to show that landscape of desolation in colour, but with attenuated almost monochromatic colours, with the perspective of those buildings that collapsed from the inside".

This series of five colour photographs has only been exhibited once in 1991 within the framework of an exhibition organized by the Bourse du Commerce.



Armenia #5, 1989 - Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris

### FAIT (1992)

71 colour photographs  
Silver print mounted on aluminium, 100 x 127 x 5 cm  
Edition 3 ex.

Fait originated with a photograph published on the February 25th 1991 edition of Time magazine: a monochrome aerial view of the Kuwaiti desert.

"I had been obsessed with the idea of this desert that was no longer one", explained Sophie Ristelhueber who had arrived in Kuwait in October 1991, seven months after the end of the war. She succeeded in negotiating in conditions just as precarious as random to fly over the desert in an airplane or helicopter during four weeks, shooting the almost abstract traces of the conflict drawn



Pont Allenby #2, 2016 - Courtesy Galerie Jérôme Poggi, Paris



striking banality. That reality is overwhelming by being hollowed and flat! There remains on the planetary theatre (where men's hearts beat) the debris and gashes that generate scraps and scars, a theme crossing all the work of Sophie Ristelhueber. The photographs are joined by a dozen of cross point embroidery, with patterns created by words pronounced by Georges Bush in different speeches. The violence and news on political speech is confronted to the fragility and obsolescence of embroidery.

This series has been exhibited at several institutions such as Martin Gropius Bau (Berlin, DE) in 2005, Quartier, centre d'art contemporain (Quimper, FR) in 2007, Jeu de Paume (Paris, FR) in 2009.

#### **TRACK (2012)**

Pigment print enhanced with acrylic, 109,5 x 131,5 cm  
Edition 3 ex.

In her series *Track*, the artist offers an unprecedented approach to landscape, in black and white, taken in France in 1984. "The new works of Sophie Ristelhueber are painted photographs, where the various manipulations to which they are subjected

underline the material, the texture and the gesture, while confusing them. (...) The railway line, seen here as a passage between different spaces and perspectives, is the metaphor of a reality that we want to shape and control" – extract from an unpublished text by Jacinto Lageira in 2012.

#### **PONT ALLENBY (2016)**

Pigment print, 130 x 90 cm  
Edition 3 ex.

Despite the emotional distance to the object resulting from the selected framing, the photographs reveal a certain melancholy. The recurved palms of *Pont Allenby* seem to bend by being confronted to the weight of history. The latent consequences of the 100th of the Sykes-Picot agreements sharing the French and British zones of influence in the Middle East powerfully emerge in this work, in front of a symbolic overcome nature. The landscape, empty in appearance, emerges saturated with meaning.

Pont Allenby is geographically located at the border of three different territories, separating Cisjordania and Syria.





on the surface of a desert that she was also going to survey on foot with her camera. The 71 photographs of the series *Fait* gave rise to large format prints fitted exactly à fleur de champ in a waxed wooden frame by the artist, hoisting these images to the status of veritable icons. They were published in a book designed by the artist, that hence is out of print, having become a cult object.

The *Fait* series has been exhibited in numerous institutions, among which Museum of Modern Art in New York, Tate Modern in London, Musée d'Art Moderne-Centre Pompidou in Paris, Imperial War Museum in London, Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, Albright-Know Art Gallery in Buffalo (US), Power Plant in Toronto, Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume in Paris, etc. The National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa recently acquired the complete series of seventy-one photographs.

Four exceptional photographs from her *Fait* series, are the core of the Armory solo show, hanging next to her famous work *A cause de l'élevage de poussière* (Because of dust breeding), that was first exhibited at PS1 in 1997 and was one of the highlight of the show *DUST* curated by David Campany at Pratt Institute in 2016.

#### **BECAUSE OF DUST BREEDING (1991-2007)**

Black and white photograph, 155 x 190 cm  
Edition 3 ex.

In 1920, Marcel Duchamp, who had allowed the accumulation of a certain thickness of dust on his *Grand Verre*, was to trace, by skillful levies and by transparency, the drawing in excessive thickness of his own work, which was photographed by Man Ray. Initially entitled *Vue prise en aéroplane* by

Man Ray, before becoming the famous *Élevage de poussière*, this work occupies a decisive place within the visual culture of Sophie Ristelhueber, who intuitively achieved in 2007 the aerial photograph of the Kuwaiti desert taken in 1991, going beyond the Duchampian reference by creating a complex metonymy of the consequences of our global contemporary geopolitics.

Exhibited for the first time at PS1 in 1997, it wasn't until 2007 that Sophie Ristelhueber gave a definitive form to this work which, due to the special place it occupies within her work, has been exhibited in several exhibitions: PS1 (New York, US); Ausgestellt-Vorgestellt IX, Skulpturenmuseum (Marl DE); MAC, Marseille, (France); The Cooper Union Great Hall (New York, US); Galerie Blanpain Art Contemporain (Genève, CH); and recently at

Pratt Institute (New York, US) at the exhibition entitled *DUST* curated by David Campany.

#### **STITCHES (2005)**

11 black and white photographs  
Silver print, laminated on aluminium, 60 x 90 cm  
Edition 3 ex.

The 11 black and white photographs of the *Stitches* series, taken in Palestinian cities, attach themselves to frozen ground details and to their epidermis. These close-ups can certainly recall from a distance lunar regions, even footprints left in Hiroshima; but they rather record, as still-life captured along the streets, matters, marks, traces, "and spaces, that take us over while we can't possess them", would say Mesa Selimovic. No horizons for these horizontal accidents, derisory, of an in fact

