

Centre d'art contemporain  
Rue Henri Douard  
91220 Brétigny-sur-Orge  
+33 (0)1 60 85 20 78  
info@cacbretigny.com  
cacbretigny.com

Discours primal

Opening  
Saturday 13 May, 5pm

Press contact  
Manon Prigent  
m.prigent@cacbretigny.com  
+33 (0)1 60 85 20 78



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## Press Release

One of the movie scenes that has impressed me the most over the last years features Julianne Moore, alias Havana Seegrand, struggling with her coach, Stafford Weiss, played by John Cusack, in David Cronenberg's *Maps to the Stars*, which was adapted from the cult book by Bruce Wagner.

The woman is lying on her stomach on a gym mat, the man, positioned behind her, is directing her to scream to root out the anxiety and fears surrounding her past and present relationship with her mother, a famous actress who is deceased. We see the actress, her face streaming with tears, yelling out words of welcome to the ghost of a mother, "Mi casa es tu casa!"

The therapy mockingly practiced by Stafford Weiss is known as "Primal Therapy". Very popular in the 1970s and developed by the American psychologist Arthur Janov, the therapy involves helping the patient regress to her or his earliest childhood in order to produce a scream from this so-called primal period. Janov's radical approach focused on abreaction: the cathartic re-experiencing of a traumatic event. The aim was to free people to communicate powerfully in order to effect change in their lives. Liz Magic Laser resuscitated this practice in its integrity in 2017, in the context of Brexit and the American and French presidential elections.

In *Primal Speech*, Laser films a group of people confined in a padded primal room. The actors she has brought together for this group therapy hold opposing political opinions. Valerie Bell, a certified professional coach who is trained in primal therapy, "treated" the actor participants. Each person is guided to tackle his/her own ideology and to search within for the foundation of his/her relationship to the male and female politicians who could potentially lead him/her. In a reversal akin to Deleuze & Guattari's "Anti-Oedipus", Laser lays bare our most subjective and infantile motives as citizens. To fashion a synthesis here, Deleuze and Guattari would consider that analytical therapy, by focusing the problems of the individual on the private and familial sphere, protects the public sphere, and by extension the capitalist system, from the individual's questioning that sphere in any way. Subjects concentrate the search for the causes of their problems in their family history and do not carry it over to the society around them.

The reversal occurs when the artist uses one of the therapeutic techniques employed for *Primal Speech* to get a patient to relive experiences with family and friends that are linked to a past trauma—the recollection makes it possible to combat the feeling of victimization. But in this instance it is towards the male and female politicians that the subject's attention is directed. What are my expectations? My desires? My frustrations? The manipulation and cathartic principles that are at work in the film bring these projections to light. Laser adapts Janov's palliative method of clarifying emotional expression, applying it to our current political discourse.

To judge from the presidential election in France, where media communication is shaping up into something new and unexpected, the attention being paid to political discourse is directly confronted with the most complex and the most contentious of today's issues. Thus, with *Primal Speech*, while pushing her thinking further on our ambiguous and conflictual relationship to the other in a global sociopolitical context, Laser is looking to put us straight to work on our analysis.

The practicality of the show, if it indeed resonates with the project of CAC Brétigny, an art venue that participates in the life of the region and is there to be used by the community, is linked especially with the performativity of Laser's work and her desire for it to be effective. Whether doing a performance in public (*The Living Newspaper: Extra Extra*, 2013), or leading a workshop with young refugees (*Identification Please*, 2016), or tackling the formalization of media vocabulary (*Public Relations/Öffentlichkeitsarbeit*), Laser weaves her work intricately and intimately into civil society. She doesn't just show us in her art how certain things function, she gets personally involved in the system by working in collaboration and in dialogue with the very people whose practices and customs she is questioning, like Elisabeth Weydt, a freelance journalist for local television stations. Laser has interviewed in *Public Relations/Öffentlichkeitsarbeit*. The art world itself hasn't escaped her focus or her methods, witness a project like *The Armory Show Focus Group* (2013), which was produced by the very same New York art fair of the title. Invited to design the visual identity of the art fair, Laser enlisted the marketing research specialist Ben Allen of Labrador Agency to lead a series of focus groups with members of the art community—collectors, museum curators, art agents and critics—in order to analyze the art fair's identity and react to demand. In doing so, Laser puts her collaborators in the position of "participant observation"<sup>1</sup> with respect to their very own system. Participant observation was theorized by Erving Goffman in his study *Asylums* to describe the position of anthropologists immersed in a milieu, the daily life of which they share. Here the participants are the very actors of the analysis.

And so it is for the show. The actress in *Primal Speech*, Adèle Jacques in the French version and Gisela Chipe in the English version, directly addresses visitors as if speaking to patients, inviting them to express their emotions: "Check in with what you're feeling right now. Now I want you to think about the latest news. How has it been affecting you? ...Think about those people making decisions for us, who are hurting us. Bring them into the room with us now. They are here. What do you need to say to them? ...Say it." It is an invitation that extends to Brétigny through a workshop to be held during the time between the first and second rounds of the French presidential election ("Political Therapy Workshop", see page 13). The workshop will be led by the star of the video, Adèle Jacques.

Envisioned as a space that is “designed with the user in mind,” the show “Discours primal” also includes several films and objects based on personal expression formats and using a range of personal development methods to engage in and critique popular forms of public speech.

For *The Thought Leader* (2015), Laser borrows the format of TED talks, which are quite popular in the United States and increasingly so in France as well. TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) is a motivational speaking format that aims to promote “the power of ideas to change attitudes, lives, and eventually the world”. The speakers generally propose abstract solutions to contemporary problems, and they have often been criticized for omitting to offer tangible measures to attain the aforementioned objectives. TED talks lend themselves well to film and television, and have inspired many scriptwriters (*Dexter* is but one example). The monologue delivered by the young actor Alex Ammerman of *The Thought Leader* is an adaptation of Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s *Notes from the Underground* (1864) to the TED talks’ format. Laser introduces the paranoid ramblings of Dostoyevsky’s anti-hero and applies the writer’s attack on the socialist ideal of enlightened self-interest to its contemporary capitalist incarnation. In the piece complementing *The Thought Leader* entitled *My Mind is My Own* (2015), Laser asked the professional voice coach Kate Wilson to teach her own daughter, the eleven-year-old actress Ella Maré, to perform the role of a trainer in an instructional video. Laser worked with the mother-daughter duo to corrupt the instructions and analogies used for their vocal exercises.

These methods, and other TED talks, have a common foundation, namely, the art of public speaking. Above the show hovers the spirit of François Delsarte,<sup>2</sup> the French singer, teacher, and theoretician of movement and voice. Two closely related sculptures, a mirror and a crystal cube, adapt the diagrams and system of notation from the *Delsartre System of Oratory*, a learner’s manual for maximizing one’s persuasive power through the art of public speaking, first published in the 19th century.<sup>3</sup>

“Eloquence holds the first rank among the arts... The current of opinions follows the prestige of speech, and to-day, as ever, eloquence is universal queen.”<sup>4</sup>

“Discours primal” is the American artist Liz Magic Laser’s first show in France.

Céline Poulin

1 Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Condition of the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*, 1961.

2 See Charles Mazé & Coline Sunier, *The ABCC of CACB*, p. 16.

3 Abbe Delaumosne, *Delsarte system of Oratory*, E. S. Werner, New York, 1893.

4 Abbe Delaumosne, *Delsarte system of Oratory*, extract from the Foreword.

## Liz Magic Laser Biography

Liz Magic Laser (b. 1981, New York) is a video and performance artist based in Brooklyn, New York. She earned a BA from Wesleyan University (2003) and an MFA from Columbia University (2008). She attended the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture (2008) and the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program (2009).

Her videos and performances intervene in semi-public spaces such as bank vestibules, movie theaters, newsrooms and art fairs, and have involved collaborations with actors, dancers, surgeons, political strategists, refugees, art collectors, motorcycle gang members.

In her recent works, she appropriates techniques and strategies from the public opinion making, borrowed from the political's and the media's sphere. They rely on the use of linguistic and body language codes which shape the communications' issues in the daily life..

Her work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Kunstverein Göttingen, Germany (2016); Mercer Union, Toronto (2015); Wilfried Lentz, Rotterdam, the Netherlands (2015); Various Small Fires, Los Angeles (2015); Paula Cooper Gallery, New York (2013) the Westfälischer Kunstverein, Münster, Germany (2013); DiverseWorks, Houston, Texas (2013); and Malmö Konsthall, Malmö, Sweden (2012). Her work has also been shown at Swiss Institute (2016); Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland (2016); The Whitney Museum of American Art (2015); Le Mouvement: 12th Swiss Sculpture Exhibition ESS SPA (2014); Lisson Gallery, London (2013); the Moscow Museum of Modern Art (2012); the Performa 11 Biennial, New York (2011); the Biennial of Graphic Arts, Ljubljana, Slovenia (2011); and MoMA PS 1, New York (2010). Laser is the recipient of grants from Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Foundation (2013), the Southern Exposure Off-Site Graue Award (2013), New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship (2012) and the Franklin Furnace Fund for Performance Art (2010). Running parallel with "Discours primal", Laser has a upcoming solo show at Jupiter Artland (Scotland) in May, 2017. She is represented by the Various Small Fires Gallery, Los Angeles and by the Wilfried Lentz Gallery, Rotterdam.



## Available images



Liz Magic Laser, *Primal Speech*, 2016, single-channel video, 11'50'', video still.

With therapeutic activities conducted in collaboration with Certified Professional Life Coach Valerie Bell. Actors: Gisela Chipe (lead), Armeliane Bindickou, Adam Davenport, Mari Hayes, Rhiannon Lattimer and Tom Staggs; Director of Photography: Chris Heinrich; Assistant Director: Hanna Lea Novak; Assistant Camera: Sam Krebs; Audio Engineer: Joe Quartararo; Audio Assistant: Trevor Hoar; Casting Assistant: Rachel Zaretsky; Editors: Liz Magic Laser and Ben Bernstein; Therapist's script written in collaboration with Valerie Bell with contributions from Gisela Chipe. Courtesy Various Small Fires Gallery, Los Angeles.

French version: Produced with the support of CAC Brétigny; Actor: Adèle Jacques (lead); Translation: Adèle Jacques; Audio mix: François Blaignan.



Liz Magic Laser, *The Thought Leader*, 2015, single-channel video, 9 minutes, video still.

Featuring actor Alex Ammerman. Script written by Liz Magic Laser based on *Notes From the Underground* (1864) by Fyodor Dostoyevsky. Speech coach: Kristian Nammack; Directors of Photography: Chris Heinrich and Tom Richmond; Audio Engineer: Nikola Chapelle; Sound Mixer: Scott Benzel; Sound Effects Editor: Molly Fitzjarrald; Color Correction: Alejandro Wilkins; Production Manager: Anna Riley; Production Assistants: Esther Hayes, Jasmine Kyoko and Samantha Rosner. Filmed at Kickstarter in Brooklyn, NY. Participating actors: Cole Akers, Kelela Blake, Tyler Booker, Travis Branch, Virginia Ferrer, Sein Gay, Jessica Gallucci, Ryan Healey, Joseph Henry, Minki Hong, Kelvin Lofton, Rebekah Loy, Roberto Mugnai, Job Piston, James Pyecka, Mike Quinn, Hobson Riley, Khalid Rivera, Alexis Rosenbaum, Malaika Said, Stephanie Samford, Noriko Sato, Isaiah Seward, Charlii Tv, Alex Xenos and Liz Zito. Special thanks to Kathy Ammerman, Sanya Kantarovsky, Owen Katz, Ken Laser, Ella Maré, Fabrice Nadjari, Wendy Osserman, Chadwick Rantanen, Anna Riley, Hobson Riley, Hong-An Truong, Esther Kim Varet, Joseph Varet, Tomasz Werner, Kate Wilson, Spencer Wolff and Kickstarter. Courtesy Various Small Fires, Los Angeles and Wilfried Lentz, Rotterdam.

French version: Produced with the support of CAC Brétigny; Translation: Adèle Jacques.





Liz Magic Laser, *My Mind is My Own*, 2015, single-channel video, 8', video still.

Featuring actor Ella Maré. Script written by Liz Magic Laser in collaboration with Kate Wilson and Ella Maré. Vocal coach: Kate Wilson; Directors of Photography: Chris Heinrich and Tom Richmond; Audio Engineer: Nikola Chapelle; Sound Mixer: Scott Benzel; Color Correction: Alejandro Wilkins; Production Manager: Anna Riley; Production Assistant: Esther Hayes; Participating actors: Travis Branch, Virginia Ferrer, Clara Pagone, Noriko Sato, James Pyeck, Mike Quinn, Khalid Rivera, Isaiah Seward, MaryAnn Siwek, Stephanie Sanford, CharliiTV and Alex Xenos. Courtesy Various Small Fires, Los Angeles and Wilfried Lentz, Rotterdam.

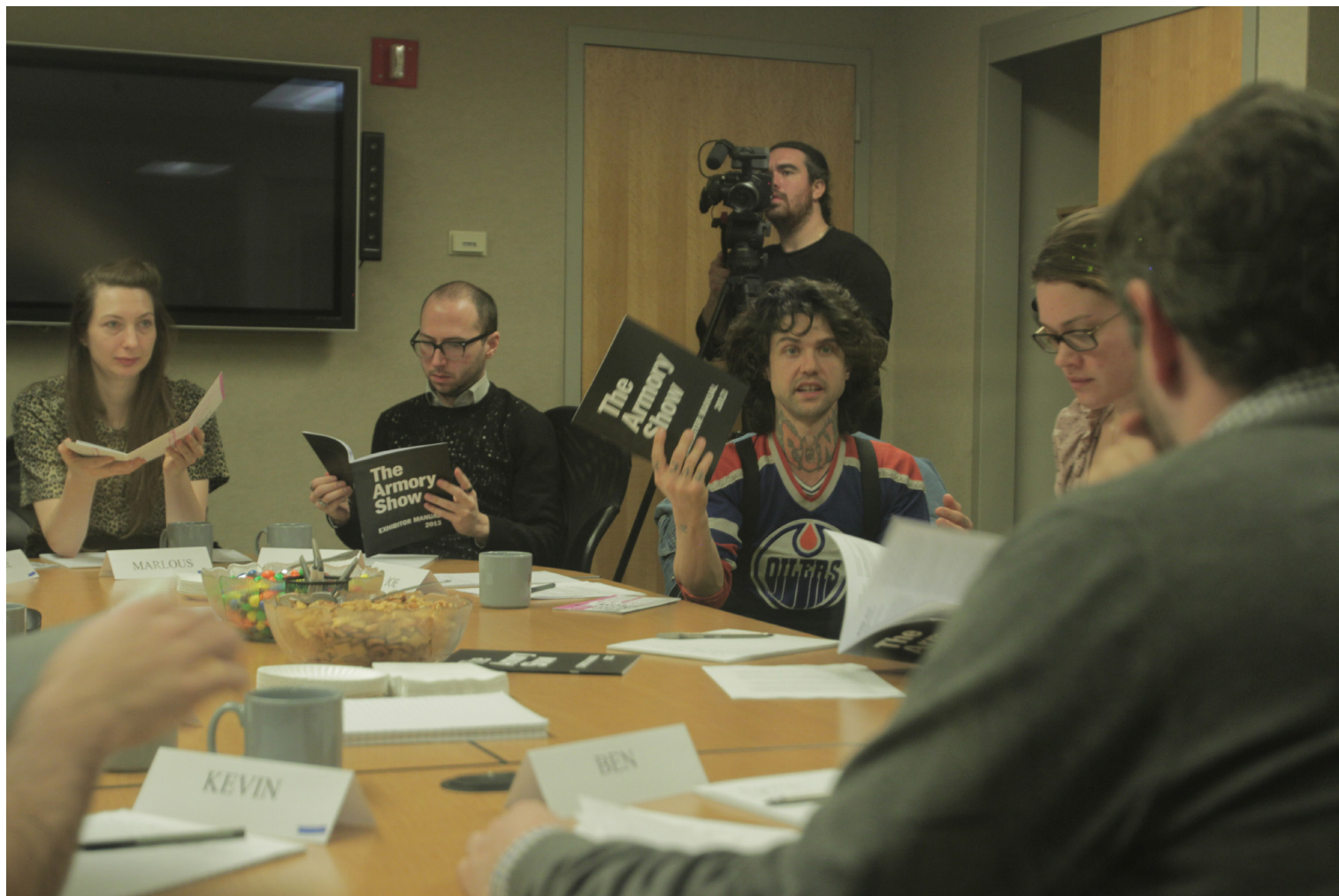
French version: Produced with the support of CAC Brétigny; Translation: Adèle Jacques; Voice-over: Adèle Jacques; Audio mix: François Blaignan.



Liz Magic Laser, *Public Relations / Öffentlichkeitsarbeit* (set models), 2013, 60 x 15 x 40 cm. Set design in collaboration with Cristian Kiehl. Photo: Thorsten Arendt.

Courtesy Westfälischer Kunstverein, Germany, Various Small Fires, Los Angeles and Wilfried Lentz, Rotterdam.

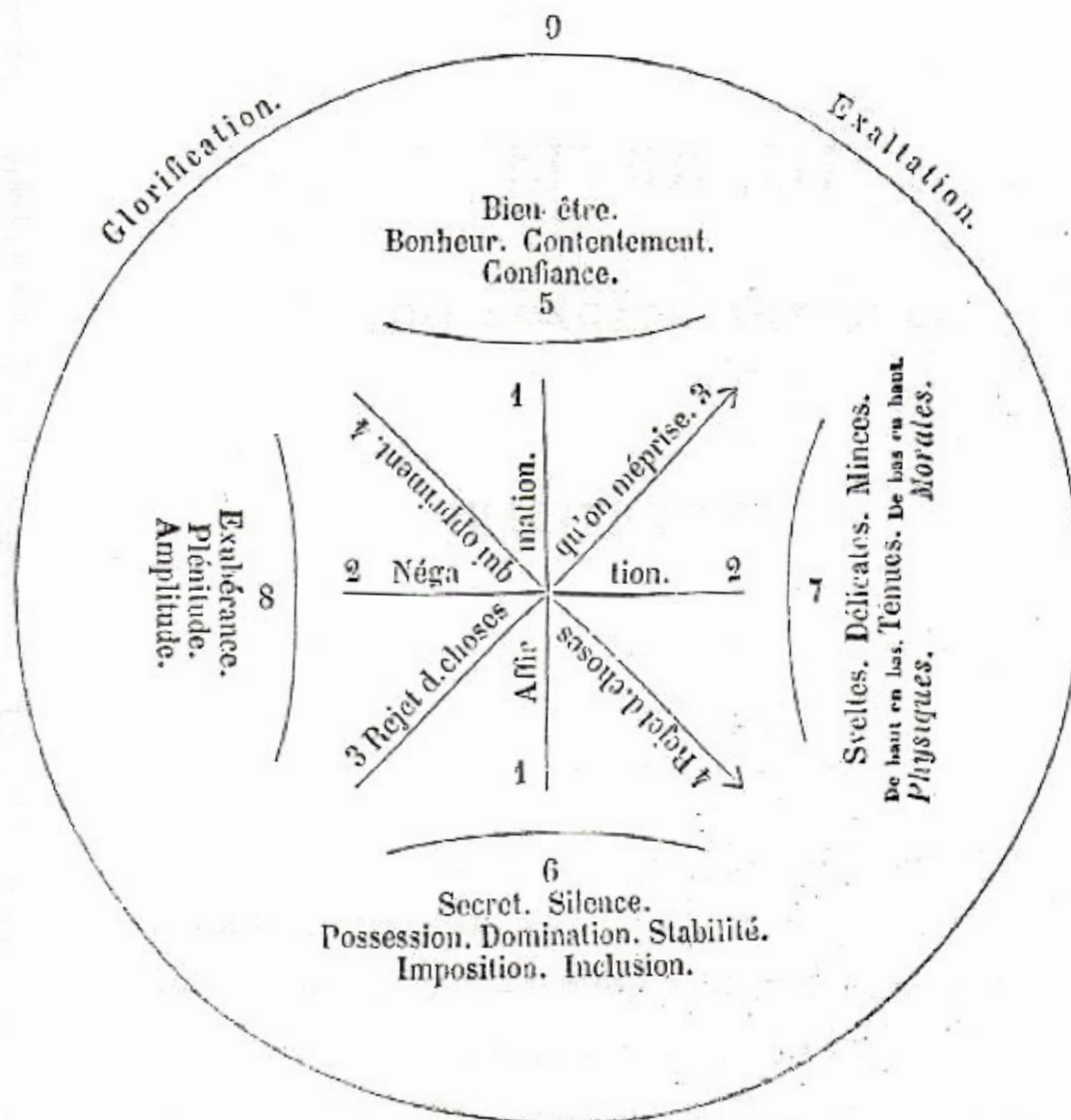




Liz Magic Laser, *The Armory Show Focus Group*, 2013, single-channel video, 30', video still.

Editor: Lew Baldwin; Videographers: Geoffrey Hug, Matthew Kessler and Danilo Parra; Production Coordinator: Brian Mcelroy; Graphic Designer: Reed Seifer; Post-production Graphic Designer: Nontsikelelo Mutiti; Sound Editor: Michael Romeo. Special thanks to Michelle Darnell, Michael Hall, Noah Horowitz, Winnie JieLin Hu, Manuela Paz, Allison Rodman and Esther Kim Varet. Courtesy Various Small Fires, Los Angeles and Wilfried Lentz, Rotterdam.

# MÉDAILLE INFLECTIVE.



"La Médaille Inflective de Delsarte, par Delaumosne"

Source: Franck Waille, "Corps, arts et spiritualité chez François Delsarte (1811-1871). Des interactions dynamiques". PHD in Contemporary History, Université Jean-Moulin-Lyon 3 (dir.: Jean-Dominique Durand), France, 2009, p. 669.

## Political therapy

Workshop developed in collaboration with and led by Adèle Jacques

Sunday 30 April, 11 am-1 pm or 3 pm-5 pm

Preparing and feeding into the exhibition, the workshop of Political Therapy was created by Liz Magic Laser specifically for the period between the first and second round of France's presidential elections.

For this workshop, the participants, guided by Adèle Jacques, who coached the actors of the video *Primal Speech*, are invited to bring to light the links between their political opinions and their personal experiences through a series of activities. These come from a range of therapeutic and meditational methods, notably from primal scream therapy, which include abreaction. By liberating the affect bound up with the memories of a traumatism that has been repressed until now, the process is designed to help the participants avert its pathogenic effects.

The workshop is meant to offer some of the experimental therapeutic techniques at work in the artist's videos. Similar workshops have taken place in New York right before the presidential election last year at Brooklyn Academy of Music and in the U.K. right before article 50 was initiated at Grand Union in Birmingham. Next month workshops will also happen at Jupiter Artland Foundation in Scotland where participants will deal with debates surrounding Scottish independence.

Adèle Jacques is a French actor, musician, writer, translator and dialect coach. She has lived and worked in Paris, London, New-York and Los Angeles where she currently resides. In addition to her work on screen she has participated in a number of cross-cultural multi-media projects, often translating and acting in the pieces. Jacques' collaborations include a performance co-created with artist Noritoshi Hirakawa for PS1 MoMA, New York, and the Foundation Cartier, Paris, a photo essay with New-York photographer Willy Somma and a video called "Adèle" co-directed by artists Sanya Kantarovsky and Leigh Ledare in which she plays a disturbed version of herself. For the past few years, she's extensively researched the myth of water and women, which brought her to collaborate and lead therapeutic group experiments such as "Dolas" in Los Angeles, a circle of women that's focused on enabling creative process.

Two sessions, two options:

11 am-1 pm, followed by a lunch

3 pm-5 pm, followed by a snack

Additional information and registration (specifying the session which is chosen):  
[reservation@cacbretigny.com](mailto:reservation@cacbretigny.com)



## Additional text

Public Relations / Öffentlichkeitsarbeit  
Kristina Scepanski

Many of Laser's performances and videos achieve their effect by using visual and linguistic mechanisms from television news in order to reveal the efficacy of those mechanisms in spite of the public's supposedly critical consumption of mass media. Laser's work references a host of literary forerunners ranging from Bertolt Brecht, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Edmond Rostand to interviews and speeches by contemporary politicians. Laser not only borrows gestures and phrases from such sources, but also appropriates their dramaturgic techniques.

Her recent work examines how speech coaches and public relations strategists teach the phraseology and gestures that have proved most successful in the art of persuasion according to nuanced market research reports. The scarcely noticeable smile and measured nod of the news presenter facilitates our acceptance of the most ghastly news evening after evening. The reporter's or politician's persuasive body language subverts our better judgment, subliminally affirming that everything is going to be all right.

Studied body language and careful costuming have long augmented the rhetoric of our politicians and news presenters; it often seems that their function is to incite empathy or to distract and reassure the public. Laser focuses on these manipulative techniques in politics and media, which, due to their ubiquity, appear deceptively inconsequential. How is it possible under such conditions to form one's own independent opinion, or indeed, to influence so-called "public opinion"?

Laser has identified the traditional acting techniques at play in the representation of current events; this led to her engagement with the avant-garde theater movements of 1920s Germany and Russia. There, too, the fusion of theater and information was present – albeit motivated by a different agenda. The disseminators of the Soviet "Living Newspaper" were devoted to an educational mandate as information was mostly inaccessible to the masses, who were largely illiterate.

In Brecht's era, the emphasis was on challenging illusionistic theater in an attempt to create a politically mature audience: he believed that actors should no longer try to elicit an empathetic response from the audience, but, rather, should convey ideas in a way that encouraged the audience to adopt a critical point of view. Henceforth, a model of provoking independent thinking in the audience would supplant illusionism in the theater.

Producing informed critical viewers ought to be the intention of today's political and news agencies involved in the dissemination of information, but instead politicians, managers, and journalists are trained in the very performance techniques of illusionistic theater that

Brecht once fought against. The German term “Öffentlichkeitsarbeit”, which literally translates as “public work” (or less prosaically, “public relations”), suggests that the formation of a particular public goes hand in hand with active effort and engagement. Furthermore, it is not merely a public that is being actively produced, but also an opinion.

Kristina Scepanski, “Afterword” in *Liz Magic Laser: Public Relations / Öffentlichkeitsarbeit*, Sternberg Press, Berlin, Germany and Westfälischer Kunstverein, Münster, Germany, 2014, p. 139.

Charles Mazé &amp; Coline Sunier

As part of their residency, Coline Sunier & Charles Mazé create an alphabet based on a collection of letters, signs, and symbols from a variety of contexts and time frames involving both CAC Brétigny and the larger territory covered by the art center, as well as artists invited to exhibit their work. This corpus is now embodied in a new typography called LARA. LARA has been activated on each communication supports, which are considered publication and dissemination points for the collection.

In some of her works, the American artist Liz Magic Laser has used and modified drawings from the French singer and teacher François Delsarte (1811-1871). After losing his singing voice, Delsarte conceived an “expressive system”, a method for learning and gesturing for dancers, mainly published and posthumously transmitted by his students in the United States. Preserved in Louisiana, original and unpublished drawings by Delsarte were studied by the French researcher Franck Waille. A diagram entitled *Écriture du Geste* from 1839 presents a succession of variations of facial expressions []. This set of 25 faces—produced by a systematic combination of eyebrows, pairs of eyes, nose and mouth—can be considered as an early version of emoticons used in today’s electronic communications [.

Each exhibition at CAC Brétigny is an opportunity to add signs and letters to LARA, and to develop its Unicode range. Initiated in 1991, the Unicode standard is the official, worldwide character coding system, assigning a name and a numeric identifier to each character. Including only 2 smileys [☺ U+263A/☹ U+2639] in 1993, the latest Unicode update brings up the number of different facial expressions to more than 80, all accessible from a computer keyboard or on a smartphone. A series of letters A, B, C—collected on the way from the train station to the CAC—inaugurated LARA at the occasion of the reopening of the art center. A selection of speech bubbles from local official publications were added for the second exhibition, “Vocales”. LARA now includes 25 smileys, representing possible variations of Liz Magic Laser’s “Discours primal”.

Coline Sunier & Charles Mazé are typographers and graphic designers. They have been living and working in Brussels since 2009, and were residents of the French Academy in Rome—Villa Medici in 2014–2015. They cofounded the publishing structure <0> future <0>.

We warmly thank Franck Waille, who made us discover Delsarte's work, and gave us access to original drawings.

## The Lost Opera

### Tony Regazzoni

Running parallel with “Discours primal” and in a coproduction with Théâtre Brétigny, Tony Regazzoni has been showing work throughout the year on the patio and in the hall of the theater. From 22 April to 3 June, he will present the third and final opus of The Lost Opera, his response to the theme chosen by Théâtre Brétigny for the third part of the season, “À mort la mort” (Death to Death).

“You can’t fight the Internet. It’s indelible,” as Hector, under great pressure at that moment, asserts to a distraught Kenny in “Shut Up and Dance,” the 3rd episode in season 3 of Black Mirror. The Internet has become that space where images never die.

Regazzoni invites visitors to contrast their ostensible digital immortality with their physical death. To anyone wishing to be a part of his work, Regazzoni proposes putting them in a scene where they can take a selfie while in a dangerous situation or facing imminent death, which they can then share on the social networks via the hashtag #megadeath, the title of his installation. Collected on Instagram or Facebook, the images will remain viewable for an indefinite amount of time, for some maybe even surviving us.

Born in 1982, Tony Regazzoni lives and works in Paris. He graduated from the École cantonale d’art of Lausanne in 2006 and the École nationale supérieure d’art of Dijon in 2005. His work has appeared in a number of solo and group shows in the past few years, including at the Machete Gallery (Mexico) in 2016, Les Abattoirs—Frac Midi-Pyrénées (Toulouse) and Crédac (Ivry-sur-Seine) in 2015, and Mains d’Œuvres (Saint-Ouen) in 2013.

More information on Théâtre Brétigny: [www.theatre-bretigny.fr](http://www.theatre-bretigny.fr)

## General Information

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Rue Henri Douard  
91220 Brétigny-sur-Orge  
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info@cacbretigny.com  
cacbretigny.com

Free admission.

Open from Tuesday to Saturday, 2pm–6pm, and the last Sunday of the exhibition.  
Closed on 25 May and 14 July.

Late openings during evening performances at Théâtre Brétigny.

Free shuttle bus on May 13. Departure from 104 avenue de France, 75013 Paris.  
Registration is required at [reservation@cacbretigny.com](mailto:reservation@cacbretigny.com).

By RER C from Paris (30 minutes):

Every 15 minutes, trains BALI, DEBA, DEBO, to Dourdan and Saint-Martin d'Étampes, the Brétigny stop.

From Brétigny station, follow the direction of Espace Jules Verne, take boulevard de la République, continue on Pl. Chevrier, take slightly to the right on rue Danielle Casanova, and at the rotary take the first exit to rue Henri Douard.

By car:

From Paris: A6 toward Lyon, exit Viry-Châtillon, Fleury-Mérogis, then Brétigny Centre.

From Evry: Francilienne toward Versailles, exit 39B, toward Brétigny.

From Versailles: Francilienne toward Evry, exit Brétigny centre.

For car-sharing, join the group "BLABLACAC(B)" on Facebook.

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