Parcours engages Basel’s historical neighborhoods with site-specific sculptures, interventions, and performances by renowned international artists and emerging talents. In 2013 Parcours was curated by Florence Derieux, Director of the Frac Champagne-Ardenne.
Florence Derieux talks to artists Tom Burr and Valerie Snobeck about Parcours

Conversations
Parcours 2013
Basel
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Tom Burr, Artist, New York
Valerie Snobeck, Artist, New York
Florence Derieux, 2013 Parcours Curator and Director of FRAC Champagne-Ardenne (Reims, France)
A complete version of the conversation is available at www.artbasel.com

Florence Derieux Parcours was created by Art Basel in 2009 to engage the art with the city, to create strong and ongoing links with the inhabitants and the visitors. Jens Hoffmann was the curator for the past three years. Every year, a new area of the city is chosen for this event. This year, it was Klingental, close to the Messeplatz, and condensed around the former military Kaserne, the school of fashion design, and the artists' studios around this plaza. Klingental is a lively area where the cultural mix is strong, and where many individuals and structures, institutions, businesses already dealing with culture, are located. My idea was to meet as many of these protagonists as possible, to understand how the people in the area are actually living in and developing it on an everyday basis. In developing projects with the artists in relation to the venues, each of them responded in a different way to this idea of site-specificity.

Tom Burr Parcours is interesting because it is both inside and outside the parameters of the fair. There's a push-and-pull between the temporary nature of the exhibition and the commitment to particular sites. We are creating an ambitious museum-like project within and for a very brief period of time.

FD Parcours comprises 17 projects, and the idea was to avoid "past-ing"—i.e. to paste existing artworks onto available venues—but rather to develop the project in close relationship with the artists. Twelve artists out of 17 were actually present before the fair and installed their works themselves. When I was invited to curate Parcours, my initial thoughts went to Tom's first works that focus on this notion of site-specificity. I've almost never requested such a precise thing from artists, but I asked Tom if he could develop a project on the main plaza, outdoors. I had in mind Tom's sculpture called Deep Purple (2000), a reproduction 2:3 scale of Tilted Arc by Richard Serra, which was installed on Federal Plaza in New York and then removed.
I have grappled with the notion of large-scale site-specific sculptures. Now, for a lot of artists, site is yet another material. The notion of site has evolved: it became a production site as well as simply a location where the artwork exists.

VALERIE SNOBECK Yes, a location is like a material, or something that you can use to add onto ideas and materials you are already working with.

TB Working on sites like these has something to do with the encounter of “ghosts.” During the installation, we talked about nostalgia, but it’s not nostalgia, it’s about being confronted with some kind of architectural, historical, or physical ghosts, and incorporating them into the works. Sometimes those “ghosts”—I’m using that term in a provocative way—can be of one’s own work, revisiting images and forms used before, or revisiting the conditions and different lives of a site, its many layers. As opposed to many international exhibitions that are spread out throughout the city in quite disparate locations, here it’s as if there’s an invisible glass wall around Klingental, and that becomes a lens through which to look at some pieces.

FD For Parcours, my role was to select from proposals made by artists and galleries. My job consisted in trying to find the best possible location to exhibit these works. I worked very differently depending on each project. Danh Vo was following a residency in Basel and he had already developed a strong relationship with the city. Arrur Zmijewski’s video My Neighbours [2009] was shot when he was in Israel, precisely at the moment when the war started in Gaza. I was really taken by this work and convinced that it had to be shown, and then

the possibility to use a classroom within the school of fashion and design—a platform for learning in an enclosed space, very secure, very protected—came up. It isolated the piece in a perfect way. It created a very particular context in which to experience the work. The same is true for Lisa Oppenheim’s work: to hear sounds within a wooden attic as if you were outside is a unique experience. We also developed several projects in collaboration with pro-

tagonsists of this area, one with Olaf Breuning at the school, another with the Kasernen Basel, a venue for theater and dance. We talked about art and dance and outlined a program together, inviting Benjamin Millepied and his LA Dance Project. Jill Magid’s piece is directly linked to the city of Basel: a few months before coming to here, she was in Mexico and became completely fascinated by the work of the Mexican architect Luis Barragán, whose archive is here in Basel. She’s using Parcours as a platform to announce a project she would like to realize, probably within the environment of an institution. That’s something that pretty much turns the initial purpose of a project like this one upside down, which I think also makes it interesting. It was, all in all, a really nice experiment to build, one day after the other, project by project, over three exciting months.