

MAGDALENA GERBER

ILLUSIONS DU RÉEL / 2013



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Sixty-four porcelain plates are displayed in a period shelf on the wall of the main stairwell of Château Borély in Marseille. Since the fourteenth century, ornate plates served as furnishings and as decoration in rooms where aristocratic banquets were held. Such plates served not only a practical purpose but also a representative function, conveying by the number of rows of plates displayed, the social status of the host.

At the same time, the work *Illusions du réel* is meant as a subversive ornament. With this pictorial work on porcelain plates, I invite the viewer to recreate the stories depicted in the snapshots from the château's more recent history with their inner eye. The fragmentary nature of the video stills transferred onto porcelain plates, transform everyday scenes from the construction site of the Château during its restoration and its surroundings into the realm of the surreal.

The surface of the plates consists of a combination of ceramic digital prints, laser engraving, and silk-screen printing applied to the surface of each plate in layers that follow the château's various stages renovation. These video stills are first printed, transferred to the plate and burned in at 950°C. Then the surface is partly removed by the engraving of the wall sketch, and lastly specks of gold are applied and burned in at 750°C.

The pictorial wall shelf at Borély is to be understood as the continuation of a series of works that question the role of everyday images on plates. The work *Tellerstories*, 2001–2009, plays with our fascination for the mysterious and at times even arouses the voyeur in us – with fleeting scenes of urban life transferred onto porcelain plates. It was the invention of ceramic digital printing in the late 1990s that made the production of such unique pieces possible. As of the present time, approximately 400 plates



→ Castle of Borély, Marseille

Previous page: Photography of the building site

Nexte page: Simulation of the installation *Illusions du réel*, 2013, Videos-tills on 64 plates, Porcelain, digital ceramicprint, gold, laserengraving, 274 x 288cm. Simulation: Loïc Muriel; Photography: David Giancatarina

The work could be realized through the generous support of Eiffage Group and Manufaktur Bernardaud.



have been produced for various exhibitions and collections as well as for the exhibition *Petit bouleversement au centre de la table* (Small Turmoils at the Center of the Table) by Manufacture Bernardaud in Limoges. The latter event inspired the limited plate edition *Camera Obscura* in 2010, in which six different night scenes were manufactured in an edition of 1000.

A sociopolitical intention underlies the works *Feuerwerk* [Firework], 2004 and [...] *Romeo, Apache, Galileo, Charlie [...]* 2011, which thematize in a subversive sort of way the aestheticization of horror and power. The first work, which displays 10 plates in a bourgeois interior, depicts exploding bombs and victims of wars and assassinations using images taken from television footage during the bombardment of Bagdad in the First Gulf War and of the attack on the Dubrovka Theater in Moscow. The second work consists of a cycle of 18 plates, showing abstract cloudy color sequences arranged by color grouping. What at first glance appears as purely decoration is revealed on closer inspection to be a series of pictorial fragments of nuclear tests. The shape of the mushroom clouds, from which the details originate, are imprinted in gold on the upper rim of each plate.

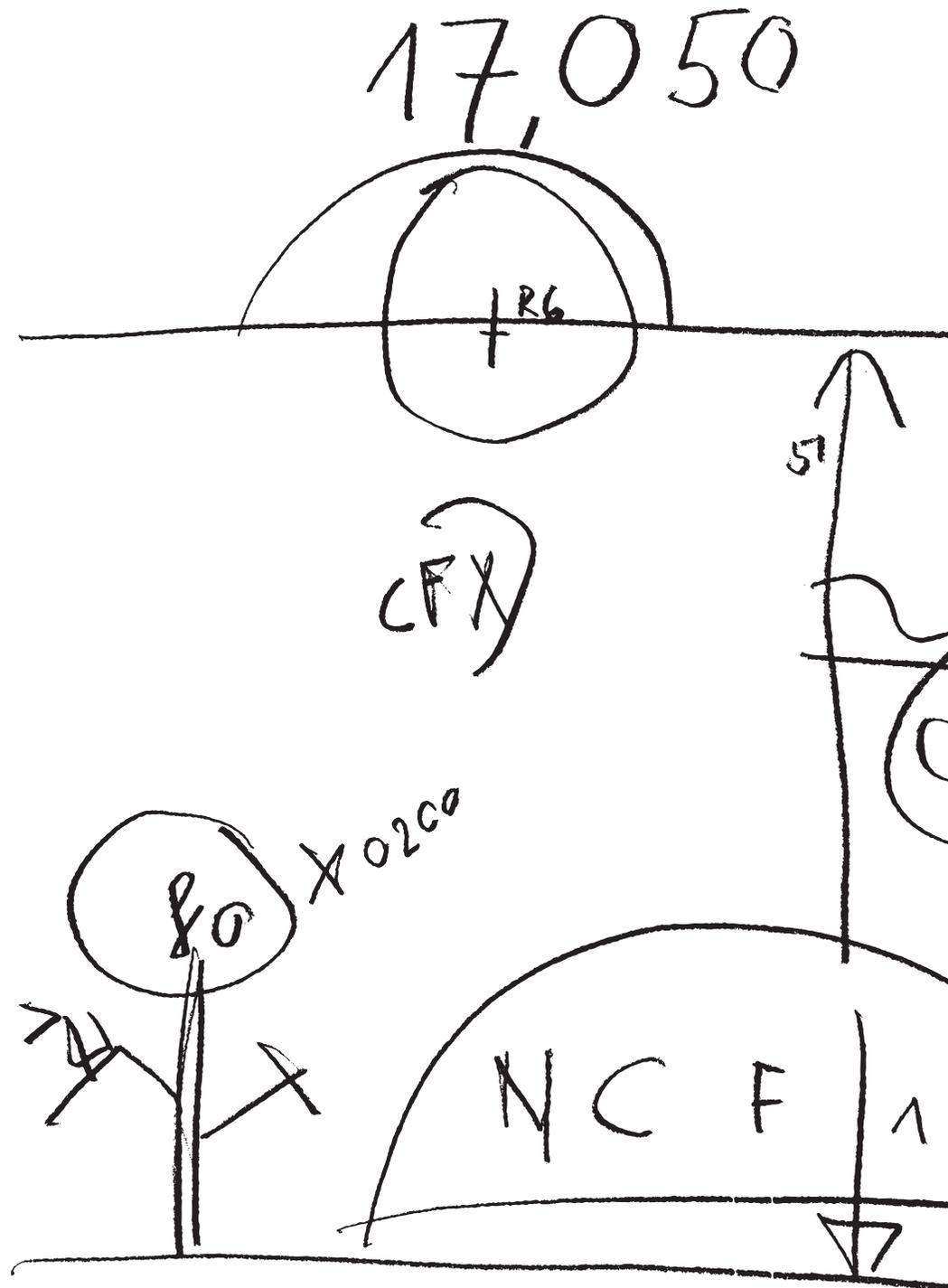
→ Two plates of the installation *Illusions du réel*, 2013, Porcelain, digital Ceramicprint, Gold, 26 x 60 cm
Next page: idem + Laserengraving





This is where the video reportage of Borély comes into being, examining the sociopolitical central question of the interplay between money, power, and work. There are no hunting scenes or other dramatic conventions depicted, but fragments of the renovation, wall sketches, and peeled off color spots. The poetical, blurred pictorial language is interrupted by the picture content via the engraved scenes and the gold specks, thereby placing at the center the craftsmen who made the realization of such an estate and its maintenance possible.

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→ Wall sketch in the Castle of Borély