

## Blue Velvet Projects

### Sibylle Ruppert: The Bible of Evil

with the participation of Armature Globale, Shūji Terayama and HDA-X Creative Agency  
curated by Pierre-Alexandre Mateos & Charles Teyssou

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Sibylle Ruppert: The Bible of Evil at Blue Velvet Projects presents a comprehensive selection of works by the eponymous artist. Inspired by the Marquis de Sade, Comte de Lautréamont and George Bataille, but also by dance and psychoanalysis, her drawings, collages and paintings all converge toward a point of corporeal excess.

Information on Sibylle Ruppert (1942 - 2011) is scarce. According to the HR Giger Museum, which is her main biographer, she was born in Frankfurt on September 8th, 1942, during an air raid. The drum of bombs brought her straight from the maternity center down to the bomb shelter. Accidentally, the first minutes of her life connected in one breath the most fragile and the most protective cavities in wartime. She was then raised in a castle owned by an aristocratic family where she drew her first work at the age of 6 - a face brutally punched by a fist. She spent her teenage years between the Städelschule Akademie in Frankfurt, touring with the Paris based dance ensemble of Georges Rech and working at her father's art school. Identifying the very first rustlings of the mind that will later become violent obsessions is never easy. All we can say is that during her twenties the initial surges of deglutinating bodies crystallized on her drawing paper. Around that time, while in Frankfurt, she befriended German intellectuals such as Peter Gorsen, Theodor Adorno and Horst Glaser and simultaneously delved into the world of the Marquis de Sade. She came back to Paris in 1976 and began to compose what are her most notable works by interpreting the seminal writing on the tribulation of flesh, such as Comte de Lautréamont's *The Songs of Maldoror* (1869), Marquis de Sade's *The 120 Days of Sodom* (1904) or George Bataille's *Story of the Eye* (1928). One of the indefectible friendships of her life was with HR Giger. The techno-somatic baroque of the latter influenced the bio-abject mannerism of Ruppert and vice versa. During that period, she exhibited at the Gallery Bijan Aalam, a now forgotten gallery that specialized in 70's dark esoterism. As her practice and persona raised public attention, her drawings nurtured the minds of writers such as Alain Robbe-Grillet, Pierre Restany, Henri Michaux and Gert Schiff. The last chapter of her life is draped in mystery. When the Gallery Bijan Aalam closed in 1982, she progressively detached herself from her art career and began to teach art in prisons, mental hospitals and drug addiction centers.

During her lifetime, Sibylle Ruppert's institutional recognition was limited. Her work was featured in the exhibition *Images of horrors and fantasy* (1978) at the Bronx Museum curated by Gert Schiff. The dark tropes of late surrealism are evoked: persecution, fear, trauma, nightmare, eroticism or death. Gert Schiff relied on a theoretical model elaborated by Barry N. Schwartz in *The New Humanism: Art in a Time of Change* (1974) which proposes a negative and excessive "existentialism" of Bataillian obedience. Even though Sibylle Ruppert's work was partly read as a psycho-sexual corpus and a repertory of paraphilia, she cannot be reduced to this folklore. Her practice, in constant dialogue with the iconographic history, escapes from a mere impulsive lyricism and is in fact a corpus of sophisticated compositions and phenomena to be deciphered. With her, the imaginary is not constituted against the real to deny or compensate for it, it extends between the signs, from paintings to paintings, from books to books and from mythologies to mythologies.

Thus, the languid bodies in prey to their demons share the posture of Aurora of Michelangelo (1524- 1527), the threatening beard which overhangs him belongs to Bluebeard by Gustave Doré (1872); the heaps of bodies inspire as much Magnasco taken back by Delacroix in *The Death of Sardanapalus* (1827) as The

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Suitors of Gustave Moreau (1862). The Bible of Evil (1978) inspired by the first canticle sung by Isidore Ducasse's hero, Comte de Lautréamont, is a sick concretion and epic in its proportions of Matthias Grünewald's Isenheim Altarpiece (1510 - 1515); a bastard variation of The Temptation of St. Anthony (1470–75) by Martin Schongauer; a disfigured silhouette from The Nightmare of Henry Fuseli (1781); a hieratic Fauna by Carlos Schwabe (1923); the sensation of being buried between Milton and Blake. Sibylle Ruppert's art is infinitely mannerist and does not shy away from references and affectations. An Archangel, a Spider (1977) evokes the acephalous armies of Odilon Redon, its glabrous and hypertrophied muscles revive the figura serpentinata of Michelangelo. One perceives the German horizons of Klinger, Von Stuck as well as Klimt, Freudian symbolism, decadent peaks and pre- Raphaelitism. In short, it is a store of horrors.

Deciding that it was better to be Prometheus rather than Jupiter, Ruppert dedicated her work to the redemptive power of flesh and the sacrifice of the late titan who gave us fire in exchange for his liver. Deciding that it was better to be Saint Antoine rather than Saint Paul, her work sutured the exquisite mannerism of Giambologna with the turgescence of Hieronymus Bosch. In that sense Sibylle Ruppert is the cryptozoologist of the Apollo 11 age. In her bestiary, bodies are without limits, the wet and viscous is coupled to the velocity and the mechanical. In its abysses, everything swarms and metamorphoses: it is the triumph of debased flesh and the spectacle of putrefaction. Her personal pantheon is like a demonology, a decadent cathedral or a breviary of clinical fantasy. In the manner of anagrams, deciphering her work means covering up buried truths, making permutations apparent and ultimately freeing oneself from the creature. Cain? Sisyphus? Cthulhu? It is to value one's life to abandon it for a dream. Sibylle Ruppert or the exegesis of Evil.

In addition to Sibylle Ruppert, the exhibition will feature three participations by film director Shūji Terayama, the architecture office Armature Globale and HDA-X Creative Agency (Hernán Díaz Alonso, fka. Xefirotarch).

**Armature Globale** is a Milan based architectural cabinet that evolves in the fringe of urbanism and cinema. Founded by Luigi Alberto Cippini, it assumes the mission and responsibilities that most architects prefer to ignore dealing with the repressed share of this discipline. For the exhibition he will exhibit his snuff architecture models that belong to a new architectural typology that makes buildings bleed.

**Shūji Terayama:** Pope of the Japanese 60's and 70's experimental cinema, Shūji Terayama has had many hats from poet to dramaturge, actor, photographer, film director and horse racing tipster. His work is at the intersection of a psychedelic dream, dark eroticism and Nippon folklore. The exhibition features his adaptation of The Songs of Maldoror by the Comte de Lautréamont that is one of the most enigmatic adaptations of the novel.

**HDA-X Creative Agency** is an LA based architectural office created by Hernán Díaz Alonso, known for pioneering digital arachnean and tortuous forms. It notably came under scrutiny after the opening of his exhibition at SFMOMA in 2006. Apparently, kids playing around the Sangre installation got injured by it. They said to the police that the installation "bitten" them. The exhibition features his most vampiric project to date.

This exhibition would not have been possible without the involvement of Sibylle Ruppert's long-time collector Marco Witzig. We also wish to thank Sandra Beretta for her support.

– Text by Pierre-Alexandre Mateos and Charles Teyssou