

Behind the Scenes of the Exhibition

From the First Visit to the Bastion to the Installation

An exhibition begins long before the doors open. In Oléron, six months of work were needed to conceive the works, imagine their arrangement, experiment with colour palettes, and build a dialogue with the unique architecture of the Bastion Royal. Here is what the public does not see: the visit that preceded the project, the preparatory drawings, the trials, and finally the moment when the paintings and installations find their place.

The First Visit

For me, an exhibition begins with an encounter with a place. Indeed, it is the place itself that determines the need to exhibit there.

When I discover the Bastion Royal of the Château d'Oléron for the first time, I take the time to look and to feel. I analyse the volumes of the building, the stone walls, the openings, and the circulation of the public during the exhibition. I also try to understand the atmosphere of the place and to imagine how my painting might come and whisper to the stones of the Bastion.

I spend several hours taking measurements. All the measurements: the dimensions of the walls, openings and passages, the available heights, and the distances between the different spaces. I also take a great many photographs.

From this first visit, I begin to sketch out an initial scenography. What size should the canvases be? Which painting should immediately capture the visitor's attention upon entering the Bastion? How should I pace the different themes within my painting? How will the installations define the movement of the public?

Very quickly, a question arises: how can I make colour infuse this space?

I then seek to define what I call a journey through colour. Colour must accompany movement, catch the eye, create spaces to breathe, and arouse a constantly renewed curiosity. Colour has this unique quality: it can speak to the widest audience and draw them into the journey through the exhibition.

But, back in the studio, I ultimately look at these photographs very little. I simply make a plan on which I draw the canvases, their estimated dimensions, and the position of the installations. Above all, I trust an order that partly escapes memory and any millimetre-by-millimetre understanding. An order that will make everything fall into place at the moment of installation!

I seek to create something other than a succession of paintings, but rather to place my paintings within a space of movement that allows the visitor's pleasure to unfold, encourages aesthetic discovery, a discovery that can gradually become an inner journey through the alchemy of the motifs and the beneficial action of colour.

Back to the Studio

Back in the studio, I redraw the plan of the Bastion. I transfer the dimensions, check the possible volumes, and rework the scenography.



The paintings presented in Oléron are not a selection of works already available in my studio. My work as a painter consists of creating paintings in relation to the place.

Of course, I draw on the themes and pictorial language developed through my previous exhibitions. But, if all goes as planned, a new exhibition should also be an opportunity to take a step aside, or even to fundamentally question my own practice.

For the new large-format works, I begin with preparatory drawings. I often make three drawings on the same sheet, in successive stages leading me towards the final drawing, using a format identical to that of the final canvas. This allows me to seek the best balance in the arrangement of the motifs.

Then comes the work on colour.

For this exhibition, I made more than seventy colour studies on small A3-format works. I test colour combinations, contrasts and densities, but also relationships between texture and material.

Nothing, however, is ever completely definitive. A palette that works in an A3 format may lose its balance when transferred to a large canvas. I then have to start again, modify it, and sometimes completely abandon a colour palette that had seemed promising.

Once the palettes have been chosen, I begin creating the matrices or stencils. Only then can the painting itself begin on the canvas.

This succession of stages may seem very methodical. It is. But it remains open to questioning right to the end.

For Oléron, this work took place over approximately six months. Twenty large-format works were prepared, along with around fifty small and medium-format works and three installations.

All this work has one purpose: to prepare for the encounter between my work and the Bastion. Indeed, it is only when my work is installed in the Bastion that I will know how this encounter unfolds. And only several months later, when I look back on the exhibition, will I know whether this encounter was decisive for my work or whether it was simply one step along the way.

Preparing to Leave

Then comes the moment when everything is ready.

The paintings are finished. The installations are ready and packed. The communication materials are finalised. The information intended for the public and the media has been sent.

All that remains is to transport everything that has been imagined and created over several months.

I load the paintings into the utility vehicle. Everything finds its place. Once everything is packed into the van, a provisional order seems to take shape before the installation.

Finally, departure. From my studio in the centre of Clermont-Ferrand, I head towards the ocean.

Destination: the Île d'Oléron.

The Installation

For me, the installation is not a moment of truth. I seek neither truth nor success.

As Krishnamurti said, "Truth is a pathless land." Nothing is ever completely true, just as nothing is ever definitively settled. And what does it mean to succeed?

The installation is rather the moment when an imagined order must meet the truth of the place. Everything must then be questioned again from the installation plan, as if engaging in a conversation with someone one is meeting for the first time.

Even the movement of air becomes a constituent element of the installation. One must be very attentive and careful at the moment of installation, so that the encounter between the work and the place can emerge.