



LISSON GALLERY

Press release
1 April 2014

THE LIGHT HOURS – HAROON MIRZA

Villa Savoye, Poissy (Yvelines)
3 April - 29 June 2014

In partnership with the Centre des Monuments Nationaux and at the initiative of **Lab'Bel**, Artistic Laboratory of the Bel Group, **The Light Hours** aims to establish a dialogue between an exceptional site, the Villa Savoye, designed by Le Corbusier in Poissy (north-west of Paris) between 1928 and 1931, and an extensive site-specific installation of sound and light created by British artist **Haroon Mirza** in what represents one of his first major interventions in France.

The Light Hours is both an encounter and a dialogue, not only between modern architecture and contemporary art but also between the expressions of two moments in history: the first half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st. Indeed, this site-specific project connects the fundamentals of the Villa Savoye - formal and functional perfection - with the reflection and research of a contemporary artist.

To invite an artist who works with sound and light to interact with the Villa Savoye also represents a restoration of the building's original function, as a "*Machine for living*" (Le Corbusier). For the Villa Savoye has indeed ceased to be a house, an inhabited place, and has become instead an historic monument visited every year by tens of thousands of people.

Based on the history and functional evolutions of the Villa Savoye, Haroon Mirza will install a system of solar panels to power the LED lights that will shape his installation. This will enable him to organize a vast network of acoustic vibrations, thus transforming into a sound-space that which Le Corbusier used to call an "*unspeakable space*". The formal simplicity of the architecture of the Villa Savoye will allow its own near-effacement, giving free reign to the vision of the artist.

Haroon Mirza is a British artist, born in 1977 in London. Combining readymade and time-based materials, he creates sound and light compositions that are often site-specific. In his work, Mirza blurs the distinctions between noise, sound and music. In so doing, he alters the function of everyday objects, as well as the sociocultural symbolism that one might associate with them. A year after winning the Silver Lion of the 54th Venice Biennale in 2011, Haroon Mirza presented a solo show ("*Preoccupied Waveforms*") at the Studio 231 of the New Museum in New York. In 2013, he launched o-o-o-o.co.uk, a website that invites artists and musicians to download audio samples of his work, to remix them and to re-upload them on his site via *Sound Cloud*.

The Light Hours is curated by Silvia Guerra and Laurent Fiévet.

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**Modernist architecture and contemporary art:
An initiative of Lab'Bel, artistic Laboratory of the Bel Group**

Lab'Bel, Artistic Laboratory of Bel Group, was created in the spring of 2010 to support contemporary art in accordance with the values of sharing, accessibility and fun promoted by the food processing group from which it emanates. Consistent with this philosophy, it has assembled since its founding a collection of works created since 2000, and organizes each year a series of exhibitions and artistic events both in France and abroad. It is directed by Laurent Fiévet and Silvia Guerra, the co-curators of *The Light Hours*.

The Light Hours is the second chapter in a series of exhibitions that invite an artist to put one of the architectural *manifestos* of the 20th century into perspective. The project began in 2011 with the exhibition *The World Trapped in it Self (mirrors for windows)*, a work by Stefan Brüggemann for the Mies van der Rohe Pavilion in Barcelona, created in collaboration with the Mies van der Rohe Foundation and the Yvon Lambert gallery (Paris).

For this second intervention aiming to establish a relationship between emblematic places of modernist architecture and contemporary art, Lab'Bel is very pleased to act in partnership with the **Villa Savoye** and the **Centre des Monuments Nationaux**, which celebrates its centenary in 2014, as well as with the **Lisson Gallery** from London, which represents the artist.

Lab'Bel: www.lab-bel.com

Centre des Monuments Nationaux: www.monuments-nationaux.fr

La Villa Savoye: www.villa-savoye.monuments-nationaux.fr

Lisson Gallery: <http://www.lissongallery.com>

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A dialogue between Silvia Guerra and Haroon Mirza

on *The Light Hours*

SILVIA GUERRA: If we take the Fluxus movement as an example of sharing artistic fields, I often think of the work of Nam June Paik, particularly in his research for an *Exposition of Music – Electronic Television*, realised in 1963 at the Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal. He wanted to create an installation between architecture and music, in which “the music became quieter and the room became more mobile”. Is this shift of space perspective, with the space becoming the indispensable partner of sound, also present in your research concerning The Villa Savoye project?

HAROON MIRZA: Sure. The space in which a sound is presented is always imperative to how that sound is perceived. The acoustic space is very different from the visual space; it is a sphere devoid of matter whereas the spaces we inhabit are usually solid and made up of flat surfaces which means that sound is more malleable than any other material. Increasingly I tend to incorporate architecture as any other ready-made or existing material in my work. It momentarily becomes part of the work which is slightly different from the idea of site specificity. The work I'm developing for The Villa Savoye is somehow both. But I guess that both the space and the sound generated by the work are inextricably intertwined with one another.

SG: You visited The Villa Savoye for the first time blindfolded. Why? What can we hear from depriving the other senses, not to see, only touch or taste? Do tactile sensations become acoustic?

HM: There are two main reasons for doing this; one is artistic and the other political. The former is an attempt to understand the space acoustically rather than visually. I want to limit the *sensorial* information I receive from the space so that the remaining (and less dominant) senses are heightened and receive more information. Thus the experience of the space changes and I am able to work completely based on the sound rather than on the visual. This kind of clue leads us to the political intentions. Contemporary culture demands that we look. The acquisition of cultural capital is *overwhelmingly* based on seeing things. Even 'seeing' music in a live event has more value than just hearing it. We go to see a band and not to listen to it regardless of the fact that the music may have been created, reproduced and distributed digitally. It is the same with monuments and architecture and of course Le Corbusier's house is a kind of extreme of this type of twist. Without having visited it, I was already familiar with the house. I saw it in books, on the Internet and I've recently been given the floor plans. Now that I've experienced the house blindfolded, I can develop a different relationship to it and also question the value of cultural capitalism. The idea is that I'll never see the house with my own eyes but I have installed and presented a work there. I'm also wondering how this process will change the perception of the work itself and how visitors would engage with it.

SG: What will be the installation's relation to natural light – since it is an architectural element of The Villa Savoye?

HM: The way light enters and illuminates the house presents an interesting mode to work with The Villa Savoye. As light is one of the key aspects of the design of the house and even the origin of its former name, 'The Bright Hours', (given by the owners of the house) I thought necessary to address this aspect in my work. The implementation of the project somehow denied this aspect since I was unable to experience the light so it made sense to use materials that would somehow give me information about the light. As a result, for the first time I will be using solar panels to power my work. This means that not only do I turn light into an experience that I convert into sound but I also propose that the light in the house determines the functionality of the work.

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THE VILLA SAVOYE – A MANIFESTO FOR MODERN ARCHITECTURE

In 1928, Pierre and Eugénie Savoye asked Le Corbusier and his cousin Pierre Jeanneret to design a weekend retreat for them. Le Corbusier had just developed a set of architectural principles inspired by the Modern Movement which he outlined in his 'Five Points of a New Architecture'.

Pilotis, roof-gardens, the free design of the ground plan and the facade, as well as the use of horizontal windows, became the defining features of Le Corbusier's technique. For the architect, the Villa Savoye represented the culmination of several years' formal research. Located in a large natural open space, free from any urban restrictions and destined for open-minded clients without preconceived ideas and expectations, the villa is symbolic of a manifesto for modern architecture from the interwar period. To borrow two of Le Corbusier's expressions, this house is both a 'machine for living' given the adaptability and flexibility of the interior space in terms of function, and a machine to 'move' or inspire, given the harmony of shapes and the play of light.

When the Savoye family moved in with their son in 1931, they called the house 'the bright hours'.

For Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, 20th-century man and his habitat were inseparable from the automobile which the Savoyes used to access their country villa. On arriving, their first view of the villa was of a structure on smooth and symmetrical pilotis (reinforced concrete stilts) through which the car drove in order to reach the front door, located on the opposite facade of the building. The curved glass wall of the ground floor entrance space was determined by the turning circle of a 1930's car, allowing the driver to leave or enter the garage. The entrance hall leads to two staff bedrooms, a large laundry room and garage. A ramp leads the visitor to the first-floor living room which opens onto the south-facing terrace through a large sliding glass door.

On the first floor, the pilotis are replaced by poles which are left visible, or hidden, through the use of partitions. The family bedrooms, bathrooms, office and kitchen with its own terrace are also located on the first floor. Horizontal windows cover the walls ensuring the interior is filled with light. The demarcation between inside and outside is almost invisible. From this level, visitors can enjoy a range of views of the surrounding countryside, grass, trees and the sky. An outdoor ramp leads from the first-floor terrace to the roof garden and solarium where a curved wall acts as a barrier for the wind. The turret contains the internal staircase which may be used to access all levels.

Designated a Historic Monument in 1965, the Villa Savoye situated in Poissy, 33km north-west of Paris, belongs to the state and is open to visitors through the Centre des Monuments Nationaux. It has undergone three major restoration campaigns between 1963 and 1997.



The Villa Savoye, Poissy
Jean-Christophe Ballot, designed by Le Corbusier © FLC / Adagg © CMN, Paris

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THE CMN – A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

The archaeological sites of Glanum and Carnac, the abbeys of Montmajour and Mont-Saint-Michel, the Château d'If and Azay-le-Rideau, the National Estate of Saint-Cloud, the Arc de Triomphe and the Villa Savoye are just some of the 97 state-owned national monuments that have been entrusted to the care of the Centre des Monuments Nationaux (Centre for National Monuments).

The CMN is France's largest cultural and tourism network, boasting over 9 million visitors a year who come to admire the vast array of exceptional monuments, parks and gardens overseen by the CMN, a diversity which surely reflects the richness of France's cultural heritage.

Making use of a flexible pricing policy, the CMN facilitates access to cultural heritage for all members of the public. Over 84% of its resources are generated from internal sources, such as visitor attendance, venue rental and sponsorship. The CMN uses this revenue to implement various research and cultural programmes at the different sites that make up the network.

LINKS:

Facebook : <http://www.facebook.com/leCMN>

Twitter : <http://twitter.com/leCMN>

Youtube : <http://www.youtube.com/user/ducdesully>

Instagram : <http://instagram.com/leCMN>

Monuments entrusted to the care of the CMN and open to the public:

Aquitaine

Grotte des Combarelles
Abri de Laugerie-Haute
Abri de Cap-Blanc
Grotte de Font-de-Gaume
Site archéologique de Montcaret
Gisement de La Ferrassie
Gisement de La Micoque
Abri du Poisson
Grotte de Teyjat
Gisement du Moustier
Tour Pey-Berland à Bordeaux
Abbaye de La Sauve-Majeure
Grotte de Pair-non-Pair
Château de Cadillac
Château de Puylaugue

Auvergne

Château de Chareil-Cintrat
Cloître de la cathédrale du Puy-en-Velay
Château d'Aulteribe
Château de Villeneuve-Lembron

Bourgogne

Château de Bussy-Rabutin
Abbaye de Cluny

Bretagne

Maison d'Ernest Renan à Tréguier
Grand cairn de Barnenez
Sites mégalithiques de Carnac
Site des mégalithes de Locmariaquer

Centre

Crypte et tour de la cathédrale de Bourges
Palais Jacques Cœur à Bourges
Tour de la cathédrale de Chartres
Château de Châteaudun
Château de Bouges
Maison de George Sand à Nohant
Château d'Azay-le-Rideau
Cloître de la Psalette à Tours
Château de Fougères-sur-Bièvre

Château de Talcy

Champagne-Ardenne

Château de La Motte-Tilly
Palais du Tau à Reims
Tours de la cathédrale de Reims

Franche-Comté

Cathédrale de Besançon
et son horloge astronomique

Paris

Arc de triomphe
Chapelle expiatoire
Conciergerie
Domaine national du Palais-Royal
Hôtel de Béthune-Sully
Musée des Plans-Reliefs
Panthéon
Sainte-Chapelle
Tours de la cathédrale Notre-Dame

Ile-de-France

Château de Champs-sur-Marne
Château de Jossigny
Château de Maisons
Villa Savoye à Poissy
Domaine national de Rambouillet
Domaine national de Saint-Cloud
Maison des Jardies à Sèvres
Basilique cathédrale de Saint-Denis
Château de Vincennes

Languedoc-Roussillon

Château et remparts de la cité de Carcassonne
Tours et remparts d'Aigues-Mortes
Fort Saint-André de Villeneuve-lez-Avignon
Site archéologique et musée d'Ensérune
Forteresse de Salses

Midi-Pyrénées

Site archéologique de Montmaurin
Château d'Assier
Château de Castelnaud-Bretenoux

Château de Montal
Abbaye de Beaulieu-en-Rouergue
Château de Gramont

Nord-Pas-de-Calais

Colonne de la Grande Armée à Wimille
Villa Cavrois

Basse-Normandie

Château de Carrouges
Abbaye du Mont-Saint-Michel

Haute-Normandie

Abbaye du Bec-Hellouin

Pays-de-la-Loire

Château d'Angers
Maison de Georges Clemenceau à Saint-Vincent-sur-Jard

Picardie

Château de Coucy
Château de Pierrefonds
Tours de la cathédrale d'Amiens

Poitou-Charentes

Tours de la Lanterne, Saint-Nicolas et de la Chaîne à La Rochelle
Château d'Oiron
Abbaye de Charroux
Site gallo-romain de Sanxay

Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur

Place forte de Mont-Dauphin
Trophée d'Auguste à La Turbie
Site archéologique de Glanum
Château d'If
Abbaye de Montmajour
Monastère de Saorge
Cloître de la cathédrale de Fréjus
Abbaye du Thoronet
Fort de Brégançon

Rhône-Alpes

Château de Voltaire à Ferney
Monastère royal de Brou à Bourg-en-Bresse

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