



PRODUCTION SITE

HEIDI WOOD

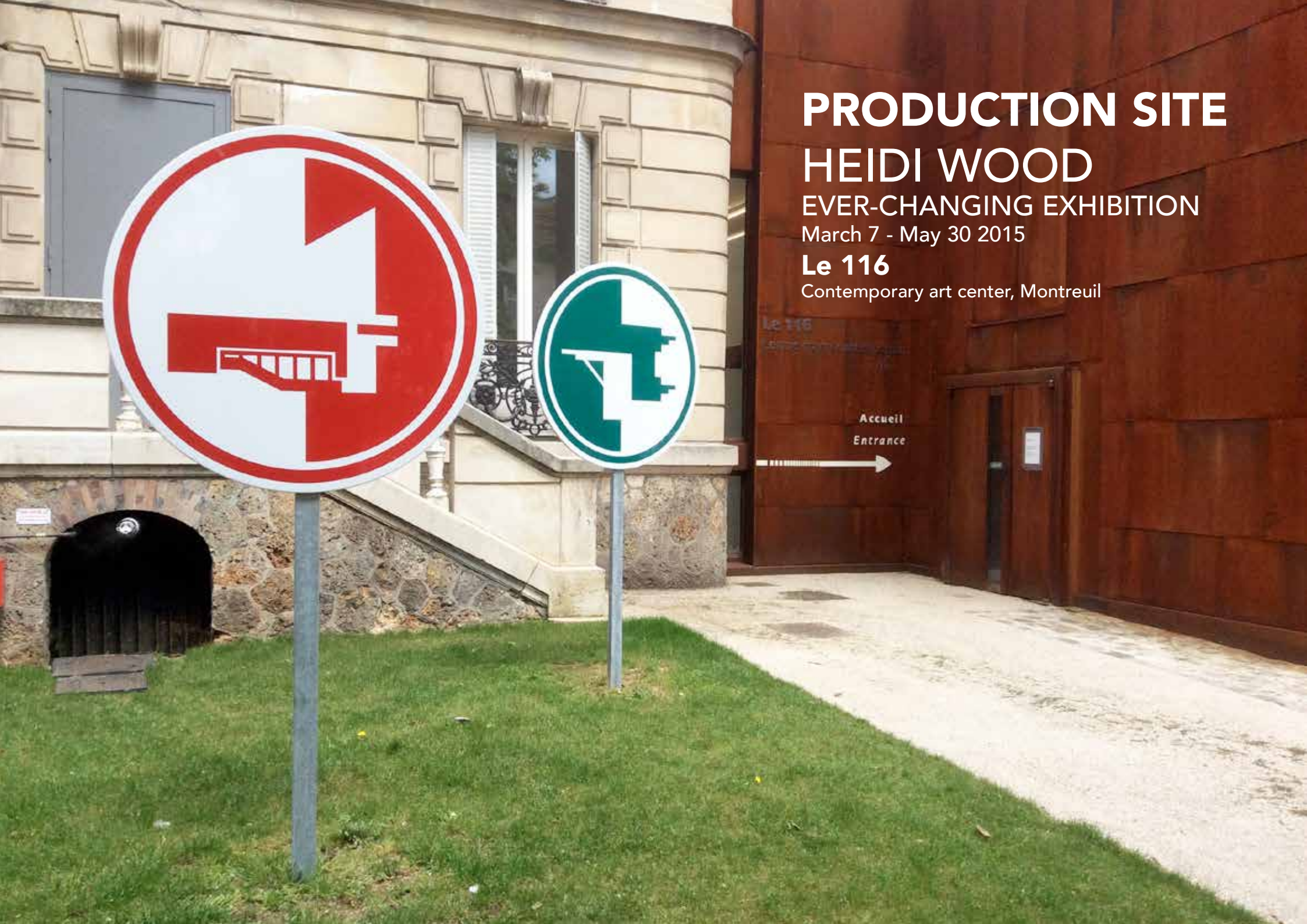
EVER-CHANGING EXHIBITION

March 7 - May 30 2015

Le 116

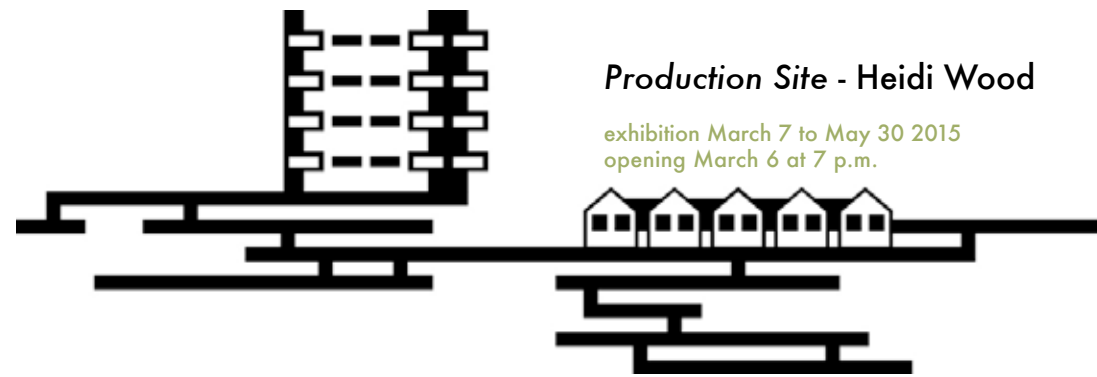
Contemporary art center, Montreuil

Accueil
Entrance





The exhibition PRODUCTION SITE marks the culmination of artist Heidi Wood's research, begun in 2010, on the visual identity of suburbia. Transforming Le 116 into a public workspace will allow her to reference Montreuil's light-industrial heritage and explore the underlying question of the porosity between art center and social context.



Production Site - Heidi Wood

exhibition March 7 to May 30 2015
opening March 6 at 7 p.m.

From March 7 to May 30, Montreuil's contemporary art center, Le 116, presents *Production Site*, an ever-changing exhibition by Heidi Wood. The artist will work *in situ* throughout the exhibition space. She will also set up her studio there, thus transforming Le 116 into a creative workspace

Leïla de Lagausie: This new project continues your work on the theme of suburbia. How is this subject central to your work? Does it take on a particular meaning in the context of Le 116?

Heidi Wood: As an Australian, suburbia has always had a residential, calm, even boring image for me. So I'm astonished to see the stigma attached to a part of town that I always thought was where everybody lived. In France, suburbia – *la banlieue* - is seen as a breeding ground for social problems. High-rise buildings have become a symbol of crime. Yet they were designed as a new way of living together that was meant to be affordable, rational and sociable. Utopia has turned into dystopia, at least in the minds of the French.

I am interested in the fall-out from modernism, but also the promotion strategies used in tourism. I see my exhibitions as visitors' centers for various destinations. I try to extract the essential of a given place so as to cast it in a positive light. At Le 116, I will study the urban landscape of Montreuil to highlight its qualities. For the first time, I will be working on the visual identity of a particular suburb in dialogue with the people who live there. In this way, I raise the question of how permeable an art center is to its social context.

LL: For this exhibition, you have chosen to use part of the exhibition space as your studio. What are you looking for in this direct confrontation with the public?

HW: It is an ironic look at the demands politicians make on artists to act as interpreters of their practices. I see this experience as an extension of my exhibition *Use-by Date* at Galerie Anne Barrault in late 2008. At the time, I announced that my paintings would be destroyed after five years if they had not been bought. The exhibition changed weekly. I highlighted the art market's voracious taste for the new just as the bottom fell out of the market and a profound change in context was underway. As it turned out, it was the quarter that saw the greatest economic shrinkage since the Depression.

Since then, public money in support of art has become less plentiful. From the Ministry of Culture to municipalities, more and more demands are made of artists to explain their work to the public. Somehow, they are supposed to rub soothing ointments on situations of distress due to the global financial crisis. I have no problem with that. Yet I think it is legitimate to ask how it changes the artworks. I am submitting to this exercise as an attempt at a response. What do I make when I am acting as a social worker for the municipality of Montreuil?

LL: *Production Site* is taking place in a particular context, given that it is Marlène Rigler's last show as the director of Le 116. What do you think of this situation? What are the implications for your exhibition?

HW: The municipality of Montreuil has chosen not to renew the contract of the curator who has been in charge, for only 18 months, of an ambitious international undertaking strongly focused on interaction with the people of Montreuil. The municipal Head of Culture has announced a reorientation in favor of local artists and local concerns. I think it's appalling. I find myself in the strange position of being the exhibition that marks a transition to a much-reduced venture. I hope that *Production Site* will draw attention to just what is being thrown away, and provoke a debate on the relationship between artistic expression and the political issues raised by financing it.

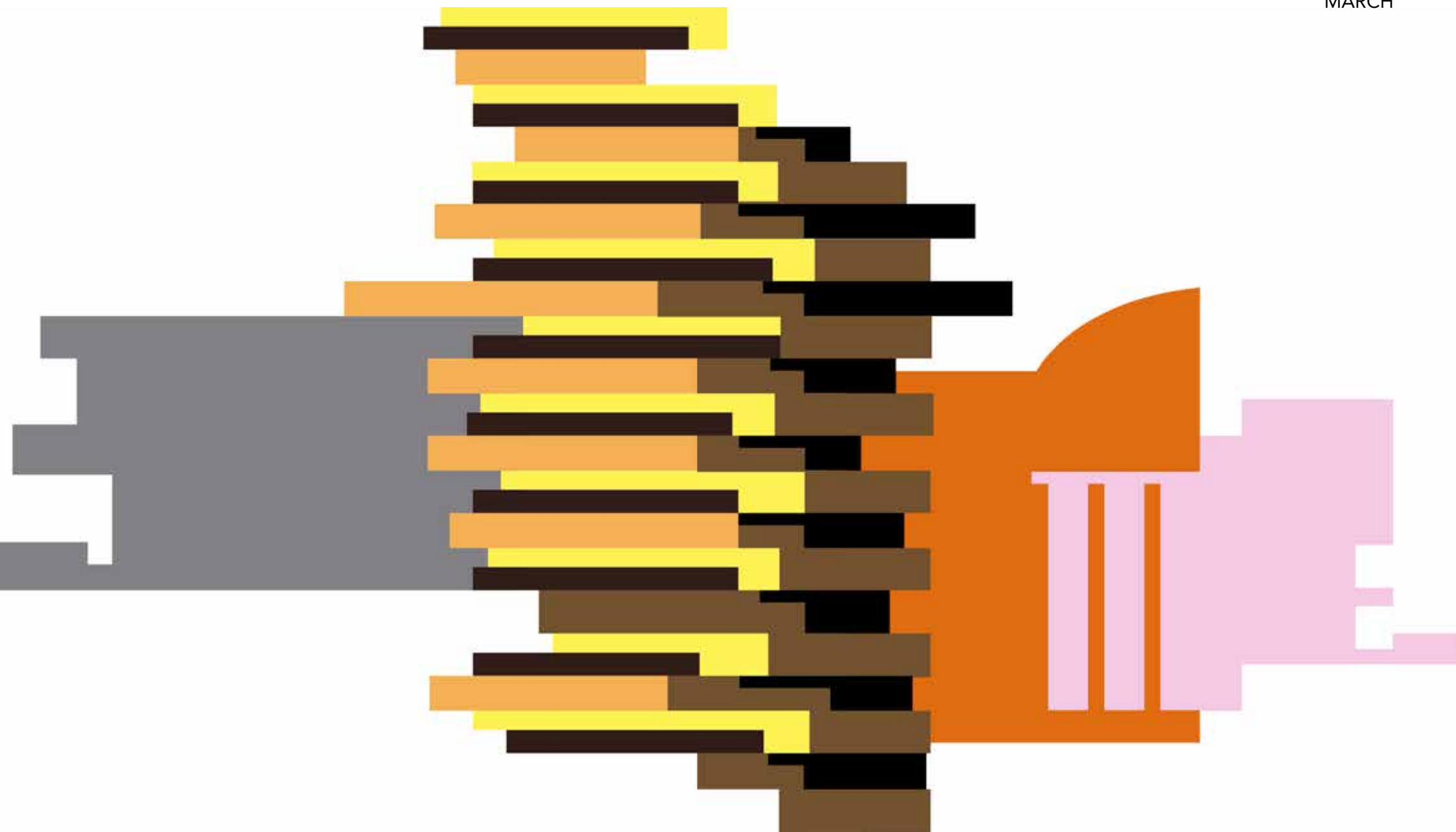
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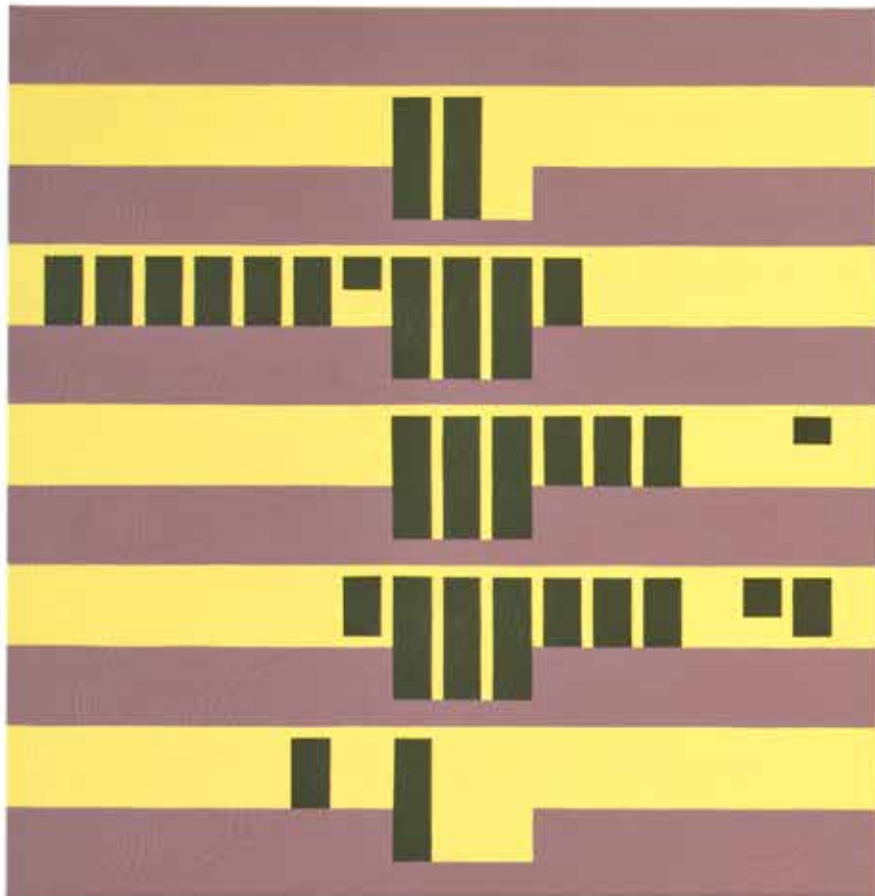
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Heidi Wood is represented by
Galerie Anne Barault, Paris

WALL PAINTING - ROOM 3
MARCH





Montreuil Textures 1 & 2, 2015, acrylic on upholstery fabric, 100 x 100 cm

WALL PAINTING - ROOM 1



MARCH



APRIL



MAY

WALL PAINTING - ROOM 1
APRIL



PRODUCTION SITE

Let's take a walk in the Woods. We pass through forests of symbols with no mixed messages. Quite the contrary, everything is there, spread over the walls and even the floor. We won't get lost. The exhibition "Production Site" takes us to Le 116, Montreuil's art center, to see the buildings that inhabit Montreuil but in a different way: as wall paintings that look like giant stickers in primary colors. Outside has come inside. The city is reduced to its signage, to a group of signs and pictograms that erase experience, or to be exact, cover it up. The forms are minimal, essential. They are the means by which Heidi Wood mimes an art that supposedly sprinkles wellbeing, by "redeeming" or "transcending" reality, allowing visitors to see their everyday life differently. More biodynamic, more vibrant, in lemon yellow and tomato red. But at the same time, the artist's work is also kept at a distance because the urban landscape appears as a group of signs that refer back only to themselves.

In fact, Heidi Wood's work, even if it uses artifacts to which we can legitimately apply categories of judgment and taste and find sensorial pleasure in, is also conceptual. With "Production Site", the artist consciously fulfills a well-known contract: public money (modestly) finances a commission as long as it meets criteria of "casting a positive light", encouraging "social cohesion" and focusing on the "local", particularly in disadvantaged neighborhoods. "I embody these clichés to play the role of the official artist," says Wood. "I'm trying to draw attention to the fact that if they are prerequisites for financing and exhibiting art, they will hamper diversity and reduce ambitions."



Suburban Monument 4, 2013, transfer on porcelain plate,
32 cm in diameter

The most striking example of this reduction would seem to be the series of souvenir plates, like collectors' items of yesteryear, that are presented under glass in the second room. The expected picturesque kitsch has been replaced by images of high voltage electrical towers in a minimal impressionist style. Except that in truth, there is no irony here. More an echo of the bemoaning (and hope) of the writer Céline in *Death on the Installment Plan*: "The day they remove the hook-shaped lamp post from the corner by Number 12, I'll be very sad. Man is temporary, I know that, but we've already temporized enough for my money. (...) Things seem pretty crummy, but if they could carry us away with them, we'd die of poetry."

This effort to put intimacy back into manufactured objects is inscribed in a project begun in 2010 in Chevilly-Larue called "Winter Vacation". At the time, Heidi Wood asked residents to bring personal objects for her to draw and used the images made of them on pencil cases, posters and various gadgets sold at the Christmas market. Without finding many customers. We are so "deprived of the world", to use the expression of philosopher Franck Fischbach, that the objects with which we live no longer look to us like the world. They become squalid, unworthy of being loved.

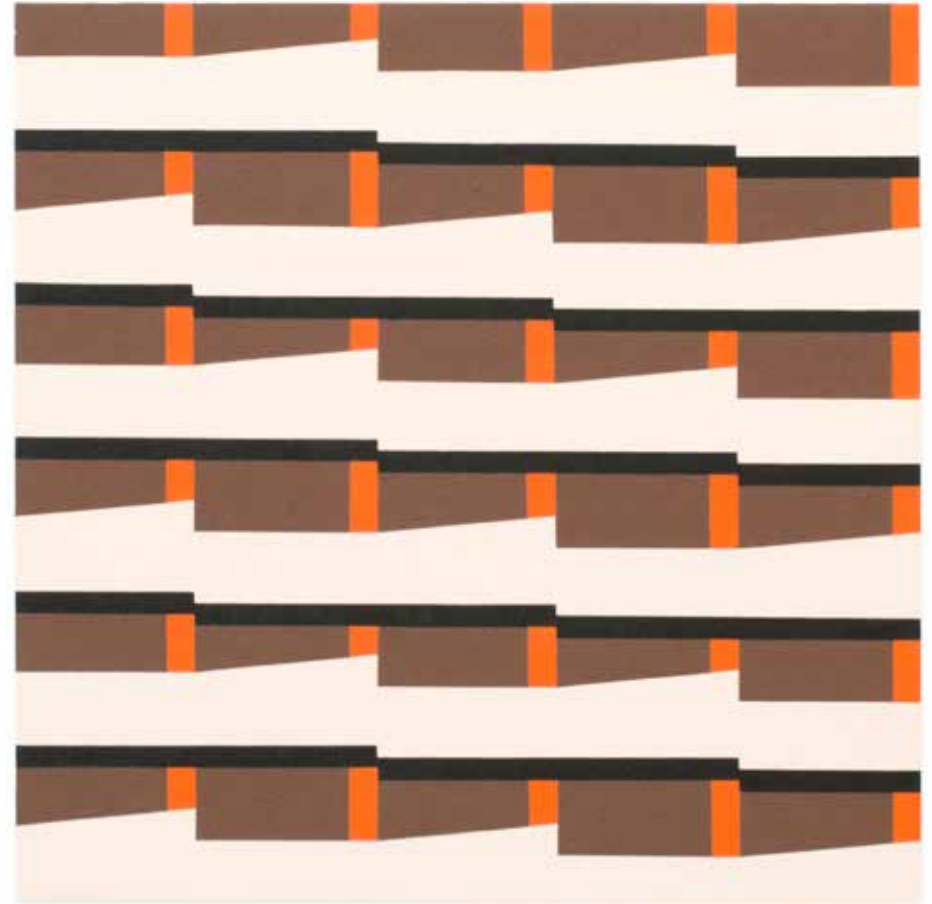
So the urban landscape Heidi Wood paints at Le 116 is not a joke. It is parody but in the literal sense, to be sung next to the ode in a well-known tune. It highlights, given that re-enchanting is out of the question. The artist works from photographs, analyses, sorts through, "filters out", she says, until she obtains "generic" forms that do not necessarily correspond to real buildings but rather to a residential setting as a whole. In Montreuil, those she notices from recent times are the modern high-rise, the contemporary and the industrial.

Among other things, Wood offers studies of facades in which she indicates an opposition between an organization based on “grid” and “anti-grid”. An example of the latter, in the last decade, is the random distribution of windows onto interweavings of color. Because these studies are painted on upholstery fabric, the facade is decoration on two levels: as surface but also as transformation. Heidi Wood says that her paintings are destroyed if they are not bought within five years. This is coherent with the contrary strategy visitors can see at Le 116 of an ever-changing exhibition. The artist develops her wall paintings day after day, adds her “generic” buildings and changes them into engines, as if form necessarily produced form.

This is one of the meanings of “Production Site”: a factory of forms. Montreuil goes in one end, through the eye, through the photo, and continuously, throughout the exhibition, comes out the other as a painting. Even better, the artist is on-site. She has set up her studio in the middle, in the passageway between the two main exhibition spaces in Le 116. She works there during opening hours, or at other times, it depends. As “a social worker for the municipality of Montreuil”, Wood legitimately wonders what this situation changes in her work, what she produces on top of a series of artifacts or a performance. A presence? Interaction?

If it is clear that art does not fix anything, does not improve anyone’s social condition, perhaps it can at least be driven by a vital principle as a gesture, an impulse, to make itself shareable. What is shared here, more than the artwork is the work that goes into it. With Heidi Wood, we are a long way from the “participative” art of the 1990’s. Visitors do not play with elements to be “activated” or “reactivated”. They arrive at a production site where what is produced (or displayed) is the production itself and they see that the artist is a factory worker like any other.

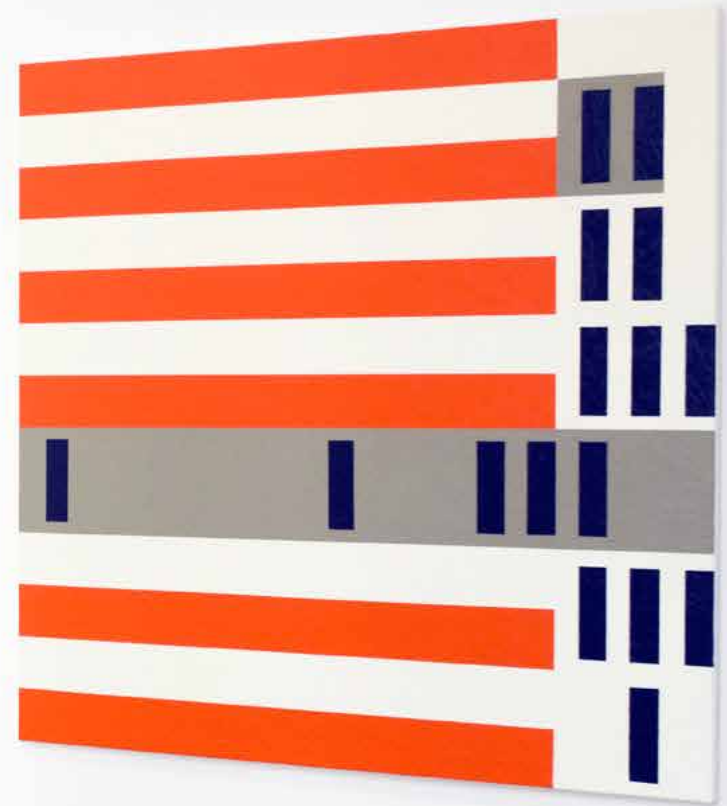
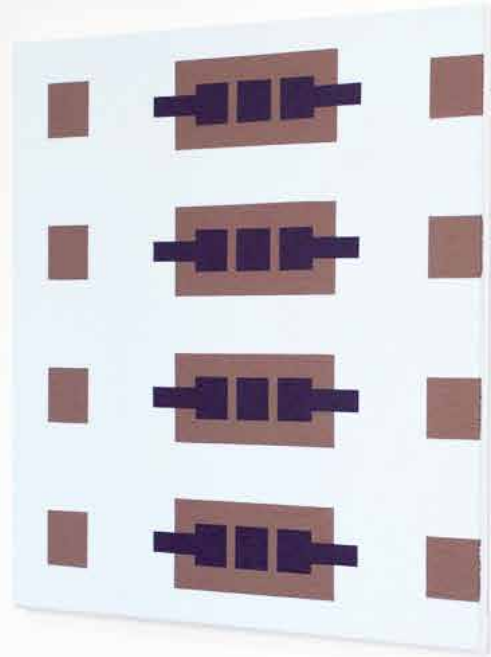
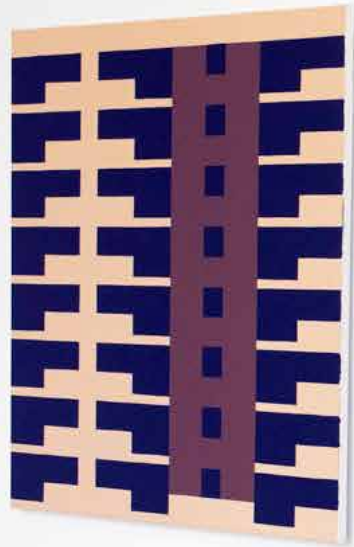
Eric Loret
April 2015



Montreuil Texture 3, 2015, acrylic on upholstery fabric, 120 x 120 cm

WALL PAINTING - ROOM 3
MAY





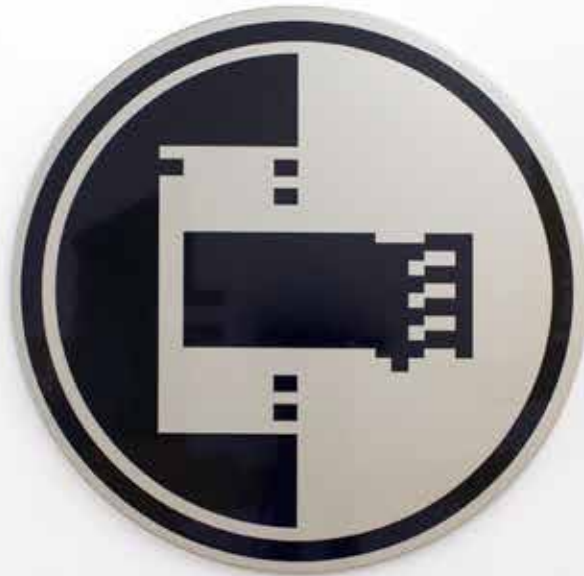
Montreuil Textures 4, 5 & 6, 2015, acrylic on upholstery fabric, 100 x 100 cm

WALL PAINTING - ROOM 1
APRIL



Montreuil Texture 7, 2015, acrylic on upholstery fabric, 100 x 100 cm

Urban Fabric 1 - 3, 2015,
aluminium road signs, car paint, 125 cm in diameter

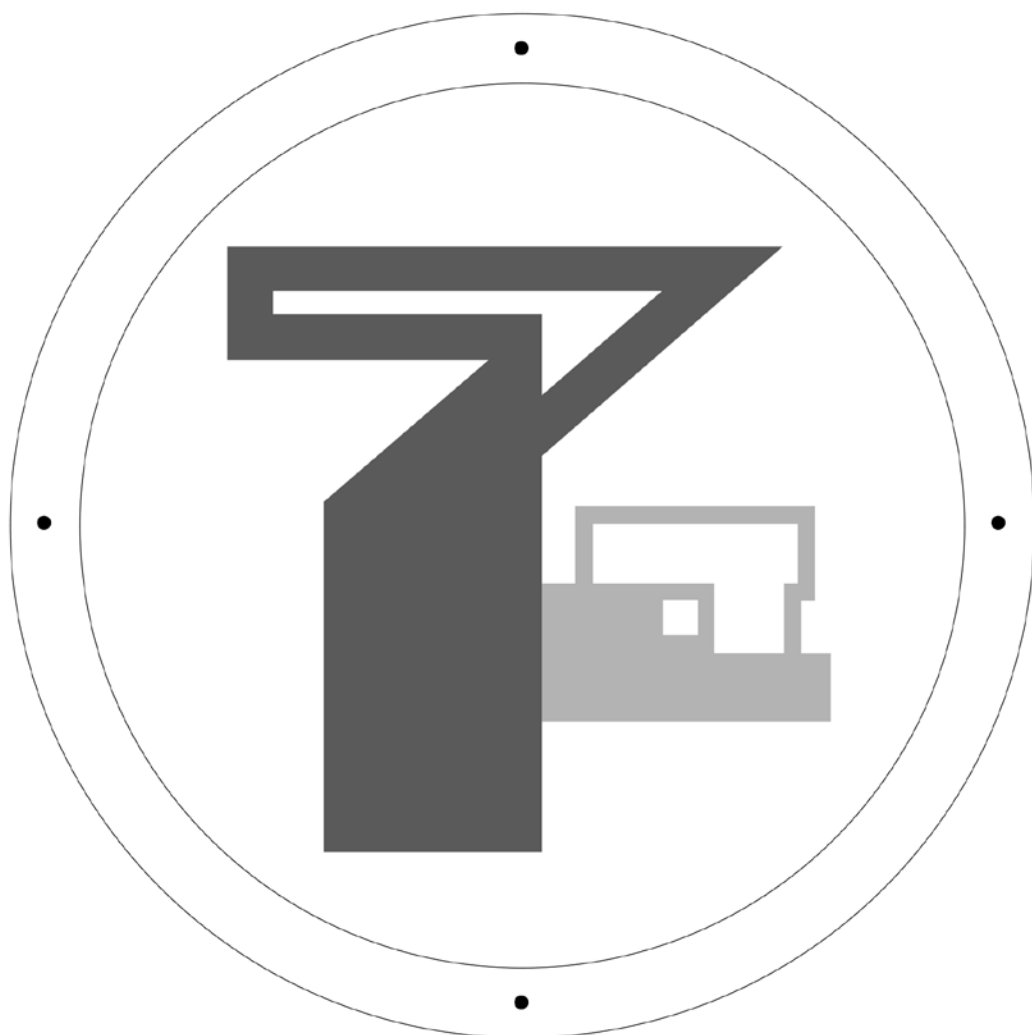


Urban Terrariums 1 - 3, 2015,
aluminium laser cut-outs, car paint, blown glass



Urban Terrarium 4, 2015,
aluminium laser cut-outs, car paint, blown glass





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This virtual catalogue documents the exhibition

PRODUCTION SITE

Le 116,
Contemporary Art Center, Montreuil
116, rue de Paris
93100 Montreuil

March 7 - May 30 2015

Curator: Marlene Rigler

Photographs: Paolo Codeluppi and Heidi Wood

Heidi Wood is represented by Galerie Anne Barrault, Paris