

Céleste Boursier-Mougenot

27 February – 23 May 2010

Media View, Friday 26 February, 10am – 1pm

The Curve, Barbican Art Gallery, London

Admission Free

With the support of Culturesfrance and the French Ministry of culture and communication and the French Institute in the United Kingdom

The latest commission for The Curve is by French contemporary artist **Céleste Boursier-Mougenot** and takes the form of a walk-through aviary inhabited by 40 zebra finches. For his first UK solo exhibition Boursier-Mougenot constructs a landscape for the birds using bass guitars and *Gibson Les Paul* electric guitars as perches, and cymbals as feeders containing water and seeds. As the birds go about their routine activities, settling on the instruments, plucking strings and pecking cymbals they create a chance composition. The sounds are amplified to resonate throughout the gallery. Also included in the installation is a series of videos that featuring close-ups of hands playing electric guitars. Rather than hearing the sound of the guitars playing we hear a humming drone produced by the amplification of the video signal.

Boursier-Mougenot trained as a musician and started his career as the composer of the Pascal Rambert Theatre Company, Paris where he worked from 1985 to 1994. From the early 90s he began making installations for galleries. Working in a variety of media, including sculpture, video and sound he creates installations which bring together the audible and the visual. He uses everyday objects and seemingly unremarkable situations to produce random and captivating soundscapes.

In *Videodrones*, 2001, Boursier-Mougenot used surveillance cameras to create a sound piece based on New York street life. By connecting the video output to the input of an audio amplifier a humming sound was created. The ongoing drone varied in relation to the amount of light and movement captured by the cameras. *Harmonichaos*, 2000–06, is an installation of 13 vacuum cleaners, with harmonicas attached to each suction nozzle. The vacuums' motors are controlled by sensors that react to sound frequencies. As visitors enter the gallery, a microphone in the sensor picks up the ambient sounds, turning one vacuum on. This starts a chain reaction as other sensors pick up the sound made by the first harmonica creating a cacophonous sound wave in the gallery. The effect is an unpredictable orchestration for harmonicas.

Céleste Boursier-Mougenot was born in Nice in 1961. He lives and works in Sète, France. He is the 2009 recipient of the prestigious Golden David Award for contemporary art. Recent exhibitions include the 3rd Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art, 2009 and solo shows at Pinacoteca, São Paulo, 2009 and Musée National Marc Chagall, Nice, 2009. His work is in major public and private collections around the world, including Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, Tasmania; Israel Museum, Jerusalem; San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art, La Jolla, California and Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Paris.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

PRESS INFORMATION

For further press information, photographs or to arrange interviews, please contact Alex Cattell, Media Relations Officer on 020 7382 6162 or alex.cattell@barbican.org.uk

PUBLIC INFORMATION

The Curve, Barbican Art Gallery, London

Opening times: Daily 11am – 8pm and every Thursday LATE until 10pm

Public information: 0845 120 7550

<http://www.barbican.org.uk/artgallery>

Admission free

TALKS AND EVENTS

Rhythms of Life

7pm/ 24 March 2010

Fountain Room, Level G

Composer and BBC broadcaster **Robert Worby** and musician, writer and sound curator **David Toop** explore the sound worlds of Céleste Boursier-Mougenot.

Free

CURVE ART

The Curve is the Barbican's free exhibition space that wraps around the back of the Concert Hall. Launched in May 2006, Curve Art is a series of new commissions inviting contemporary artists to respond to the distinctive architecture of the space. International artists who have previously made new commissions for The Curve are Tomas Saraceno (Argentina); Richard Wilson (Britain); Jeppe Hein (Denmark); Marjetica Potrč (Slovenia); Shirana Shahbazi (Switzerland/Iran); Hans Schabus (Austria); Huang Yong Ping (China); Rafael Lozano-Hemmer (Mexico-Canada); Peter Coffin (America); Clemens von Wedemeyer (Germany) and most recently Robert Kusmirowski (Poland).