

CLAIRE ADELFFANG

LE HAMEAU DE LA REINE

PARIS MARAIS

18 Mar 2015 - 18 Apr 2015



Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac Paris is presenting Claire Adelfang's third solo exhibition in March 2015.

Claire Adelfang's photographs frequently deal with the place of architecture as a trace of human activity in spite of the paradoxical absence of any humans in it. This absence is present in the trace that her photographs leave. The Queen's Hamlet (*Le Hameau de la Reine*) at Versailles is the centrepiece of this new exhibition, for which, with her profoundly calm vision, the photographer has captured the spirit of the historic place.

The Queen's Hamlet is a real village with thatched roofs inspired by hamlets in Normandy. It was ordered to be built by Marie-Antoinette just a few years before the French Revolution of 1789. She liked to stay there, far from the obligations of the court, living the simple life in harmony with the return to nature prescribed by Rousseau in his writings. There were originally a dozen houses, including the Queen's House (currently undergoing restoration), which, beneath a picturesque, rustic exterior, was furnished with great refinement on the inside.

"I do not hold court there; I live as a private person" the Queen would say when she spoke of her Hamlet.

Claire Adelfang has made a photographic transcript of these places with that same sharpness of vision that she usually brings to industrial architecture, locks, and submarine bases. Without giving in to a neo-romantic view in her approach to her subject, she has avoided all the clichés and the foreseeable narratives that might be conveyed by a kind of nostalgia connected with the poetry of ruins or the splendour of Versailles. She has approached the hamlet as a place with a story, not simply a place with a history:

"I deliberately wanted to get involved with the other side of the picture, the side where the doors and accesses are bricked up. These interiors give absolutely no descriptive clue as to the identity of the place and what I was trying to preserve – a timeless quality, expressed, as it were, outside the shot. I would like there to remain a paradoxical sense of withdrawal, which would make what is threatened appear. Not to describe phantom places or haunted places, but to restore them to an unreal presence."

Claire Adelfang graduated from the Ecole des Beaux arts in Paris in 2010. Her work has already been exhibited in several public and private establishments, including the Institut Culturel Bernard Magrez, Bordeaux. Her photographic work earned nominations for the Prix Meurice 2013 and the Prix MasterCard 2013, while her video *Les Forges* was an installation in the Oratoire du Louvre for the "Nuit Blanche" art festival in 2013.

The photographs in this series were commissioned by the Etablissement public du musée et du domaine national de Versailles. A selection of photos by Claire Adelfang is to be published as a portfolio in the free biannual magazine *Les Carnets de Versailles* (n°7, April - September 2015).