

**Aurélie PERTUSOT**  
*Filatures*



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SARLAT

AGENCE **CULTURELLE** DEPARTEMENTALE DORDOGNE-PERIGORD

## Aurélie Pertusot's *weft & warp*

### Sarlat or the resistance of reality

In Peter Weir's *The Truman Show* (1998), Jim Carrey was horrified to find himself living in a TV fiction in which he was the only real character, surrounded by actors miming life. To free himself, he made for the end of this artificial world which had been witness to his birth, and butted up against the laminated plaster partition wall separating him from the "real" world – before smashing his way through. After being invited to a research and creative residency in Sarlat in autumn 2013, to begin with, artist Aurélie Pertusot also felt the strange sensation of being in a decor-town. It wasn't just the impression of off-season emptiness common to many tourist towns or villages; the walls seemed to exude another story - night. The frontier between the real, the artificial and the fictional formed the weft and warp for her project for Sarlat, high spot of cultural and gastronomic tourism, but also a source of resistance during the Second World War. Reshaping the town via her representations inspired by postcards and the invisible reality of its sounds, she weaves links between fiction and reality, present and past, night and day, and invites us to experience (or imagine) the town in a different way.

In Sarlat, Aurélie Pertusot lives and works in the birthplace of Etienne de la Boétie, which also houses the town's Heritage Department. To begin with, she discovered that the town was the first urban site to have benefitted from the 1962 Malraux Act on protected sectors, as early as 1964<sup>1</sup>. Its old buildings have been entirely restored; the town has also been modernised, as scheduled under the Act, to "improve the living and working conditions of the French". Given a new lifeblood, Sarlat became a leisure haven much sought-after by tourists. Why then does Sarlat exude a somewhat artificial fragrance of a model town? In its quest for authenticity, did it do away with reality, as if real life couldn't accept such an overly faithful restoration? "The town is porous", wrote the artist, "voices, footsteps, noise of wheels over the cobblestones seem to filter in from everywhere". "A curious onlooker, whom we can hear from afar, is constantly approaching us." Walls don't absorb sounds, like cardboard partitions which are just illusion. Maybe it is also the history of the town from 1939-1945 welling up, when Sarlat housed "just" figures such as Lucien Garrigou and his hotel-restaurant Saint-Albert<sup>2</sup> ?

To stop this expanding time-space quantum, Aurélie Pertusot tries to capture the contemporary world of sounds which, maybe, embodies the true life that escapes, hides – or is deliberately put to one side, as if it disturbed, bothered and prevented the real time journey from unfolding. The artist strolls around the deserted night streets, capturing the purring of air-conditioners or metal gates squeaking in the wind... The recordings become the *Sound Portrait* of Sarlat, that can be heard in the Maison de la Boétie. And in the town which is as empty at night as a theatre stage after closing, Aurélie Pertusot clicks her heels on the cobblestones and haunts the journeys of night-owl inhabitants, like an actress in a film without a story. The result is a little item of just under half an hour, a minimal *Wayforward*

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<sup>1</sup> Former bishopric (1318 to the Revolution), Sarlat features a rich architectural heritage from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, preserved from renovations with the decline in the town's importance.

<sup>2</sup> For further information, see the website of the Anonymous, Just and Persecuted during the Nazi period: <http://www.ajpn.org/commune-Sarlat-la-Caneda-24520.html>.

resonating in the Chapel of the White Penitents, conjuring up the figure of Catherine Deneuve in Truffaut's *Dernier Métro*. To this resistance which has come down through the centuries and incarnates itself in figures -anonymous or not- and collective or individual forms, Aurélie Pertusot summons up a last, contemporary type of resistance. Walking through the streets of Sarlat during the daytime, she is struck by the sound of the beige loudspeakers which create a climate of false wellness. With their commercial messages -subliminal or not- which we too easily tolerate, do they embody what La Boétie in the 16th century already described as "voluntary servitude"? In any case, the artist dreams of giving them another word to convey, that of the hidden night world, like the negative of a town whose reality is heightened in a different way.

In Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982), the *Replicants* had an artificial past made up of a series of photographs of moments they had not experienced. In Sarlat, Aurélie Pertusot looks at this form of piecemeal memory constituted by postcards and notes that many have an identical point of view, or highlight the same buildings. Shaping how sender and recipient see "reality", they also freeze the vision of real visitors, concocting a cliché town. In her *Futurs souvenirs*, Aurélie Pertusot works on a large series of postcards of Sarlat which she scratches, rubs, cuts out etc., with the "curiosity of a child cutting up its teddy bear to see 'what it's like inside'". "These intrusions into the images are for me a sort of sabotage and interference: with my cutter and surgical precision, I attack by making incisions, inserting, tearing this mass-produced object and to each postcard I give a unique character. With my needle, I pierce and sew artificial memories to make them mine, with all the violence that this supposes. The act of extraction is irreversible and it's difficult to objectively make up the missing parts." With their offset visions of a future where holes have been made, pierced, torn, but also a future which is open and linked, these metamorphosed postcards call on us to actively and poetically re-appropriate the town. This deferred, interlinking and sometimes violent project of an artist who has been able to dress the faulty communication between beings and things in a "here and now", where she herself was intercessor, maybe surprises, but it also contributes to nurturing a form of poetic resistance, in line with La Boétie's *Contr'un*, just like artistic and urban actions in the 1960s and 1970s. "Demystifying the town" (of Sarlat), in her words, Aurélie Pertusot exposes what, of its past and present, might constitute the fertile breeding ground for a creative re-appropriation of the location.

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Plan simple, Marche à suivre ©Aurélie Pertusot - 2014



Sans titre 2, *Futurs souvenirs* (extrait de la série),  
carte postale grattée © Aurélie Pertusot - 2014