

**This place is a place inhabited by History with a capital H (that of Poland and France) and the intimate history of a family over several generations through the objects and souvenirs that furnish the castle. How did you come to slip into this? Is this a form of new narrative that you are offering us? And if so, what is it? Or are you participating in a kind of revival of this place through your intervention?**

**VS/** History with a capital H is indeed very present in the castle, through paintings and objects. **Xavier Branicki** bought Montrésor in 1849 and made it a refuge and a place of reunion for generations of Polish people. During the Second World War, **Anna Potocka** joined the resistance at the age of 77 and played an important role in welcoming resistance fighters and Jews who wanted to cross the demarcation line to escape the Nazis. I also discovered the complexity of Polish history by taking an interest in Montrésor. I did not choose to make it the main axis of the project, but in the billiard room, where two large history paintings face each other, a room will show the different states of the Polish territory.

The family history will be present in the film and in the ghost story. Photographs will be mixed in with the family photographs. The history of the castle is also a history of women. **Xavier Branicki** bought it on the advice of his mother. **Anna Potocka**, mentioned earlier, was an emblematic figure in the family. In one of the rooms of the castle, there are exclusively portraits of women. I will install a room that will evoke the transmission thanks to the participation of the three daughters of **Georges and Geneviève Szerauc**, the last generation of the women of Montrésor. To answer your question, I think that the story of the ghost introduces a form of new narrative and above all a new way of evoking the characters of this family. The revival is brought about by the presence of the voices, the songs and the women of the last generation.

**In your work, as is the case here, the question of intimately linking individual and collective memory is a recurring theme. I would like you to tell me more about it.**

**VS/** In my first Super 8 films « **The Garden and The Beach** » I inserted passages from 8mm films shot by my grandmother of my brothers and me as children. I used these images from family films to provoke memories and establish a link to a collective memory of childhood. For the Montrésor project, contrary to what I had assumed, there is no (or it has been lost) family film archive. The link between individual and collective memory will therefore be made in another way. It exists above all through the history of the family, the relationship to the exile and the attachment to the country of origin, to the roots, and through **Anna Potocka's** engagement in the resistance... the collective memory of the Second World War, which we all have through stories, films and images, then arises for us.

As for the exile, if we are attached to the idea of the importance of roots, we all have family roots from which we have more or less moved away. The films in the garden were also about that, about the importance of the first place, the place where we spent our childhood and which we always remember. Finally, the use of the sound extract from a film from 1942 may provoke cinematographic memories in some people, without necessarily being associated with the film mentioned, but with the whole of French cinema of the 1940s and post-war period.

## « MONTRÉSOR » (2020)

### VALÉRIE SONNIER

Exhibition from 19 May to 31 October 2021 at **Castle of Montrésor**

#habiterlelieu

#livingintheplace

Commissariat artistique :  
**Anne-Laure Chamboissier**  
— [www.champrojects.com](http://www.champrojects.com)

« **Montrésor** » is a vast installation (drawings, film, photographs, sound) that the spectator is led to discover as he wanders through the interior space of the castle. The drawings blend in with the objects in the castle, in addition to the framed family photographs on chests of drawers. The drawing allows the artist to establish a « portrait » of the place by exploring it in its smallest details. The film and the photographs to follow the description of the place and pay homage to the lives that have passed through them in the form of a ghost. A white faithful form to the first idea that one can have of a ghost from childhood and which represents all the ghosts of the place. **Valérie Sonnier** does not only strive to evoke the memory of places, but also to intimately link individual and collective memory.

**VALÉRIE SONNIER** is in 1967, graduated from the Beaux-Arts de Paris in 1993. In 2003, she was appointed professor of drawing and morphology. Through the deliberate use of various mediums, drawing, painting, photography and super 8 film, Valérie Sonnier deploys a universe worked by the links between intimate memories and collective memory of childhood, by the notions of presence and absence, ghosts and apparitions. Among her recent exhibitions : Frac Picardie (Amiens), la Maba (Nogent-sur-Marne), Centrale Électrique (Brussels), Helsinki Art Museum, Grand Palais, National Museum of Fine Arts (Taiwan).

## « LIVING IN THE PLACE »

Gathered together by **Anne-Laure Chamboissier**, artistic curator, about ten artists were invited to live in places\* in Touraine from spring to autumn 2021 following a creative residency. The theme « **Living in the place** » takes on its full meaning at a time when everyone is reviewing their lifestyles and the spaces that surround them. The artists reinterrogate what constitutes these places, whether through the prism of their history, their architecture or their function. These works draw a new and sensitive cartography of the territory through their singular view of these places.

\***Castle of Azay Le Rideau** : Anne-Laure Sacriste, **Charterhouse of Liget** : Benoît Fougeirol, **Collegiale of Bueil-en-Touraine** : Cécile Le Talec, **Castle of Gizeux** : Guillaume Constantin, **Castle of Valmer** : Charles le Hyaric, **Castle of Champchevrier** : Diego Movilla, Priori of St Cosme : Natalia Jaime Cortez, **Castle of Saché** : Léa Bismuth et Nicolas Boulard, **La Devinière** : Jean-François Guillo et Didier Galas, **Domaine of Candé-Monts** : Eric Mézan, **ecoMuseum of the Véron** : Florent Lamouroux.

With the support of **Indre-et-Loire Departmental council**



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## LIST OF WORKS

### Projection room :

*Montrésor*, digitized super 8 mm film, 10', 2021

### Dining room :

*Sound installation*, conversations coming from the kitchens, 2021

*The Wrath of Diane*, drawing after the sculpture by Antoine-Louis Barye, charcoal on paper, 2021

### Small living room :

*Game table installation* (collection of the Castle of Montrésor)

*The Phantom of the Staircase*, film photograph on transparency in an antique frame, 2021

### Italian boudoir:

*The golden lady*, photogram on transparency, 2021

### Billiard room :

*The three states of Poland*, interventions on books, 2021

*Between dog and wolf, after The Wolf Hunt* by Alexandre-François Desportes, charcoal on paper, 2021

Stuffed wolf installation under the pool table (collection of the Castle of Montrésor)

## USEFUL INFORMATION

Castle of Montrésor  
11 Street Xavier Branicki  
37460 Montrésor  
+ (0)33 2 47 19 27 50  
<https://chateaudemontresor.com>

### Library :

*Ouija*, set of ceramic plaster casts of hands, 2020

### Corridor:

Sound installation, extract from Evening Visitors (Marcel Carné), 1', 2021

### Bedroom :

*Colors of sun*, title borrowed from *Peau d'âne* (Jacques Demy), installation, 2021

### Large lounge :

*Montrésor*, drawing in engraving holder (collection of the Château de Montrésor), pencil, colored pencils and wax on paper, 2020

*Phantasmagoria*, silver photographs and photograms on transparencies in old frames, 2021

Daguerreotype, collection of the Château de Montrésor

Montrésor, series of drawings, pencil, colored pencils and wax on paper, 2020

*The phantom of the large living room*, film photograph on transparent, 2021

Polish songs, sound installation, 2021

**Open daily** from 01 March to 11 November.  
**From 01 March to 30 June 30 and from 01 September to 11 November** : 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

**From 01 July to 31 August** : 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

**Full price** : 9 euros **Reduced price** : 7 euros

Interview between

**Valérie Sonnier**

and **Anne-Laure Chamboissier**

**You have been invited to realize a project in situ at the Montresor's Castle. What made you interested in this place ?**

**VS/** I was immediately enthusiastic about the idea of investing in the **Castle of Montrésor**. My interest was first stimulated by the rich history of the family who have handed down the castle for seven generations, as well as by the discovery during my first visit of a whole « abandoned » part that I had not suspected the existence. Two spaces coexist : the first floor, which has been abandoned, and the part of the castle that is accessible to the public, as if it is frozen in time. Indeed, it is one of the few castles in the region that is still furnished as it was originally, and any visitor walking through it can easily imagine how the family lived there a short time ago. This contrast was perfect to talk about the time passing, but also more precisely to pay homage to those who made up the history of this place, evoked by the presence – in my film at least – of a ghost, a recurrent question in my work. In a previous film project, *Footsteps under the Snow* (exhibited at the *Frac Île de France* at the **Castle of Rentilly** as part of the exhibition « **Le cabaret du néant** »), I filmed my family's house before I left it, then empty of all furniture and haunted by a ghost. Its appearance symbolises all the spirits and beings that have inhabited this place.

**You have been in residence at the castle for three periods. How did these times feed your project ?**

**VS/** These three stays allowed me to film and photograph the interiors and exteriors of the castle. Some ideas for shots were already obvious from the first visit, but many others came to me as I spent time there. I shoot in Super 8 and send my films to Berlin for development. It takes two to three weeks from the time I send them to the time I can see the images. So I needed to space out these three trips to film according to

the results. I was thinking about the idea of gold, the treasure of Montrésor (there is a « treasure room » in the castle) and I had started drawings using gold pigments. Finally, the gold appeared when I viewed the negative version of the colour films, which determined my way of filming during the last two stays.

In parallel to the filming sessions I was able to meet with descendants of Count **Xavier Branicki**. They generously accepted to answer my questions, to tell me the history of the family and of Poland, and I was able to record sounds during a Christmas party, an occasion for family reunions around Polish songs. The sound installation in the Montrésor project will include some of these sounds.

**Montrésor is presented as a vast installation that is spread out in different rooms inside the castle. How did you articulate these multiple elements in the space : film, drawings, photographs, sound... ?**

**VS/** The film will be projected in a room dedicated exclusively to the projection, which will be at the beginning or the end of the tour, as the visitor wishes. The drawings are a presentation of the decor, a series of exterior views of the castle. A single large drawing will open the tour by responding to the hunting trophies that adorn the walls of the dining room. Photographs and sound installations will punctuate the tour, the idea being to articulate the pieces in situ while maintaining a certain « lightness of presence ».