

Fragmented Views Recomposed:
Photography after Cinema
Christian Lebrat

3. Rideaux

The *Rideaux* series (Curtain series) was photographed at the end of the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s in a studio painted black. It was created with a grand economy of means, using rope, fabric, water, metal plates, and dead leaves. A restrained vocabulary existed to evoke suspension, like a stop on the image. Exhibited since 1992, Dominique Noguez saw in them “frozen, virtual cinema”, everything connecting to the painting, whereas Sylvie de Meurville (who discovered me twenty years later) talked of “the drama of vanitas” and specifically:

The *Rideaux de Pluie* evokes, without a doubt, the approachability of the stage curtains, the subterfuge of the magician, the expectation of the reveal. But in this theatre of the light, it is water that gives the measure of the ephemeral... In the play of illusions, the curtain itself sometimes seems to disappear, never leaving a dry trace on the wall. Its imprint and its water, in its capacity to capture upon the light, becomes subject or revealer of its absence.

One can even say the “curtains” are the shutter of the photo camera, while the curtains in the photo mask or reveal the screen (therefore the image) in the theatre.

Several series compose “the curtains” including: *Levers de Rideaux*, *Bleus*, and *Lumières*.



They have been realized with a 24 x 36 camera.

The photographs are the result of ephemeral installations. The photographic snapshot transformed the light and froze the installation.



Rideau pour Rothko, 1988

Colour photograph.

Size: 140 x 93 cm

The curtain used was stored in my studio. The curtain hung in my childhood bedroom.

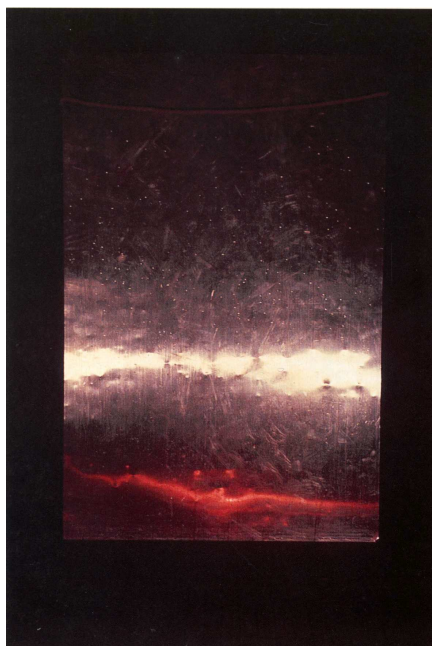


Lumière 1, 1988

Colour photograph.

Size: 140 x 93 cm.

Some dead leaves found near the studio, a metal plaque and a rope.

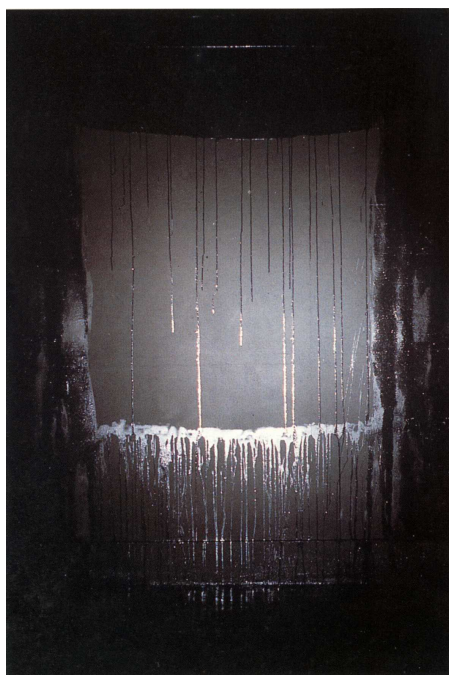


Lumière 3, 1990

Colour photograph.

Size: 140 x 93 cm

Only a square of light, lit in a certain way, levitating.



Lever de Rideau 1, 1988-1989

Colour photograph.

Size: 140 x 93 cm

The curtain of my childhood was placed on the wall, then the wall was moistened. The curtain was withdrawn and the photo was taken, leaving nothing but the imprint of the curtain.

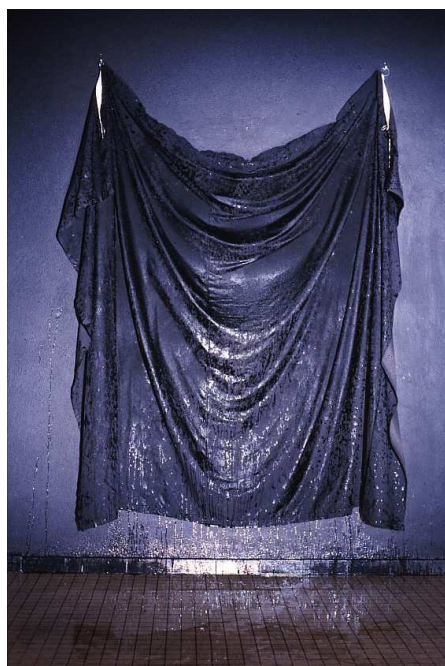


Bleu 2, 1990

Colour photograph.

Size: 140 x 93 cm

No object in the studio but the light and the water: water sprayed on the wall and on the ground.



Rideau de Thiais, 1990

Colour photograph.

Size: 140 x 94 cm.

In the French word “curtain” (rideau) there is the word “water” (eau). Here the curtain transformed into a shroud and the water provided the weight of memory.



Diptyque de Thiais, 1990

Colour photograph.

Size: 140 x 250 cm

The curtain, discovered during my time of residence in Thiais (a city near Paris), hung over the years, on the same window without moving. It protected the outline of the window, its imprint becoming a negative.



Cinéma, 1991

Black and white photograph

Size: 130 x 150 cm

Photographed in the cinema, the slice of light comes between two panels of curtain.



R2 (Who's afraid of...), 2009

Triptych

Fabric curtains, rods, tape on the floor

Size: 220 x 400 cm

Installation at Ryerson School of Image Arts Gallery, Toronto, March 9–14, 2009.

Photo: Rekha Ramachandran

The thematic of the curtain in *R2 (Who's afraid of...)* is found in the expression of the “real” curtains made out of material, sewn and installed on the wall. If the curtains are thus displayed, they strongly shed light on (rather than give birth to) shadows in the pleats. They can evoke a painting or a sculpture. The volume, the shadows and the color assume, however, a singular “presence”. The weave, the material, and the woven threads evoke a network of sensations, in the centre of which, the spectator can “quiver.”

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Translated from French by Kassandra and Iryna Prus

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