

FINANCIAL TIMES

Collecting

Public display of connection

Florence Derieux tells *Caroline Roux* how the Parcours helps connect Art Basel to the city

The invitation to curate Art Basel's Parcours series – a dozen public-access installations that appear in a part of the city away from the fair itself – couldn't have come at a better moment for Florence Derieux. With her own exhibition space at the currently-under-reconstruction Frac (Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain) Champagne-Ardenne in Reims, where she is director, the 40-year-old Derieux was more than happy for the opportunity to put together a show – even at short notice.

"I only started working on it officially at the beginning of December," she tells me from her room in a three-star pension in Venice, near the Accademia, 10 days before the opening of Art Basel. ("Don't believe it when people tell you location is everything. You wouldn't think that if you were sitting where I am now," she remarks ruefully of her hotel surroundings.)

The Parcours (which translates as "route" but carries with it a sense of discovery) was introduced as a component of Art Basel three years ago to

link the art fair with the city and vice versa. Until now it has been overseen by Jens Hoffman, deputy director of the Jewish Museum in New York. Last year's offerings included street performances by clowns in smeared make-up, still walkers and dancers on the opening night, courtesy of Los Angeles artist Kathryn Andrews. There was also an evocative recreation of Swiss artist Dieter Roth's studio, and the inconspicuous hanging of some abstract works by Canadian Rodney Graham in a restaurant called Zur Mägd, where they simply faded into the décor like so much restaurant (and public) art.

Derieux is uncowed by the programme's history, partly because it has rather passed her by. "I didn't see the first two editions and I saw very few projects last year," she admits. "But I did make it to Dieter Roth's studio – that's the outstanding work that I'll remember." Such straight talking seems to be her



Above: last year's Parcours, which featured street performances by clowns, still walkers and dancers; below: this year's curator Florence Derieux



stock in trade. "It's impossible to bring a strong curatorial position or theme to the Parcours," she continues, when asked how she has assembled the work. "There's no time, and it's in different available spaces each year."

This year, the programme takes place in the Kilnental neighbourhood, an area in Kleinbasel (on the north bank of the Rhine) that contains the old barracks, or Kaserne (now a theatre and arts centre), and a main piazza, and is bordered by the red-light district. "Kleinbasel has always been where they sent the people they didn't like, all the outsiders," says Derieux. "Today it's the liveliest part of town, with lots of art and

cultural projects already in place. I had to consider that – it could be awkward bringing art to a place that's already doing it anyway."

She first negotiated with the Kaserne, and invited the one-year-old

'It could be awkward bringing art to a place [Kleinbasel] that's already doing it anyway'

LA Dance Project to perform on the opening night, June 12. The artistic collective, which includes dancer Benjamin Millepied and musician Nico Muhly, will perform a Merce Cunningham work from 1964 called *Winterbranch*, of which it has sole ownership.

"It's still scandalous, it's so challenging and far-out," says LA Dance producer Charles Fabius of the piece, which has a soundtrack by La Monte Young that includes the noise of ashtrays being scraped over mirrors. "Rauschenberg designed the set – such as it is – and the lighting, and you can hardly see the dancers. People still think the lighting is a mistake and there are still a few people who



From left: 'Der Trog' (2013) by Jill Maghid; 'Gustav's Wing' (2013) by Danh Vo, both represented in the Parcours

walk out." (The piece has been performed in Los Angeles and recently at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris.) A second piece called *Moving Paris*, created last year by Millepied and by American artist Christopher Wool, in which three large paintings are continually moved around the stage by dancers, sounds easy to digest by comparison.

"I know nothing about dance," declares Derieux. "I know it's different in the UK. You have Michael Clark and Charles Atlas. But in France there's a separation: we in the contemporary art world are the visual, they in the dance world are the movement. So this is new to me."

For those who see the confluence of art and dance dating back to the Ballets Russes, this might come as a surprise, but you can hardly begrudge Derieux's honesty.

She is on more established territory with artists such as Tom Burr and Lothar Hempel, with whom she has previously created survey shows, and who will both be represented. Danh Vo, meanwhile, will present a delicately balanced installation called "Gustav's Wing" in the Museum Kleines Klingenthal, composed of a life-size bronze of his 11-year-old nephew Gustav and an obituary from the LA Times of his grandmother Ngo Ti Ha. (An emigrant from 1970s Viet-



A still from Marc Bauer's 'The Architect' (2013) Freymond-Guth

city proper, and creating a link between Basel's population and the fair, Derieux is a good choice. Her work at Frac is very much concerned with education and outreach in a deprived part of France.

"The Champagne area is losing population every year," she explains. "The local iron industry has gone; there are 15 inhabitants per square km. People live in Reims itself, but apart from that, it's pretty deserted." She joined Frac in 2008, keen to work in a public institution and with a team, after having worked in commercial galleries in London and Paris and as a freelance curator in Zurich.

"For the last 18 months at Frac I've defined more precisely what we do and am building on the cultural specificities of the region. Important characters such as [poet] Rimbaud and [philosopher] Gaston Bachelard come from the area and the protagonists of the French revolution – peo-

Marina Abramovic's 1972 sound work 'The Airport' will be broadcast in a typical Swiss square

ple concerned with the examination and the expansion of the real."

Such pragmatism informs the Parcours too. Another Lisson Gallery artist, Jill Maghid, will use the event to present a proposition for a new piece of work, with an architectural model and documentation of a project she would like to create. "It's the equivalent of a trailer made to find producers," says Derieux. "She's addressing the art world and directors of institutions." Art Basel itself is first and foremost a commercial proposition. Asking for investment is an interesting way to turn it on its head.

With the Parcours' two-fold purpose of bringing art fair visitors into the

Art Basel runs June 13-16 www.artbasel.com