

**Exchanges of artists and studio-residences between Quebec and Upper Austria
Atelierhaus Salzamt, Linz**

**Xavier Labrie
April-May 2022**

IN CONTEXT

On March 5, 2018, I had to undergo a bone marrow transplant to recover from chronic myeloid leukemia. I am now in full health and the disease seems far behind. A few months later, I earned myself a residency in Austria: at that time I was alone, I wanted to see the world and meet new people. And now the coronavirus emerged out of nowhere. Result: I had to wait a year and a half to take advantage of this opportunity. Water flowed under the bridges. My wife came back, we had a little girl and we bought a new house. It was in this completely different context that I left on March 28, 2022 for Berlin to make a significant meeting there.

On March 31, 2022, I had the chance to meet Nico Mehlhorn, a 24-year-old German. This is my bone marrow donor, the guy who saved my life 4 years ago. The meeting allowed us to exchange our versions of what we experienced and to get to know each other, in the hope of perhaps seeing each other again. It was a very special meeting. I gave her a bouquet of flowers, a symbol of my gratitude, before taking a train to Linz in Upper Austria.



This bouquet was to become a pretext for the exploration that I was going to carry out at the Atelierhaus Salzamt. Under the theme of gratitude, the objective would be to explore different mediums in the development of a multidisciplinary corpus combining sculpture, linocut, video mapping and photography.

THE ORIGINAL



The original cut-out, which will serve as a stencil and/or pattern for the exploration of the coming months, consists of an A4 sheet. At the end of the residency, the framed cutout will be sent to Nico Mehlhorn as a thank you.

DIFFERENT VARIATIONS



Five large formats (65cm x 50cm) were produced. Created from the cast shadow of the original decoupage, they are exact replicas of the bouquet. These will be used in the next stages of research to mask light and create shadows in the development of photographic staging. They can also, when the artist returns to his home, be framed, exhibited, sold.

VECTOR DRAWING



Wanting to deepen my knowledge of vector drawing in order to be able to use laser cutters in the short term, I traced my bouquet pattern using the inkscape software. This drawing will be of great use in the next steps. With the aim of using video mapping as a lighting system, the drawing will allow me to intervene with control and precision on the color and textures that I want to use.

PHOTOGRAPHIC STAGE



Very limited by the support and the frames at the start of my career, I am now trying to decompartmentalize my work from the full and the empty, to deploy it in space. The production of the last few months has led me to see the immense potential of digital tools: a duo installation project with filmmaker Benoît Ouellet and a video mapping that I made inspired me with many new avenues.

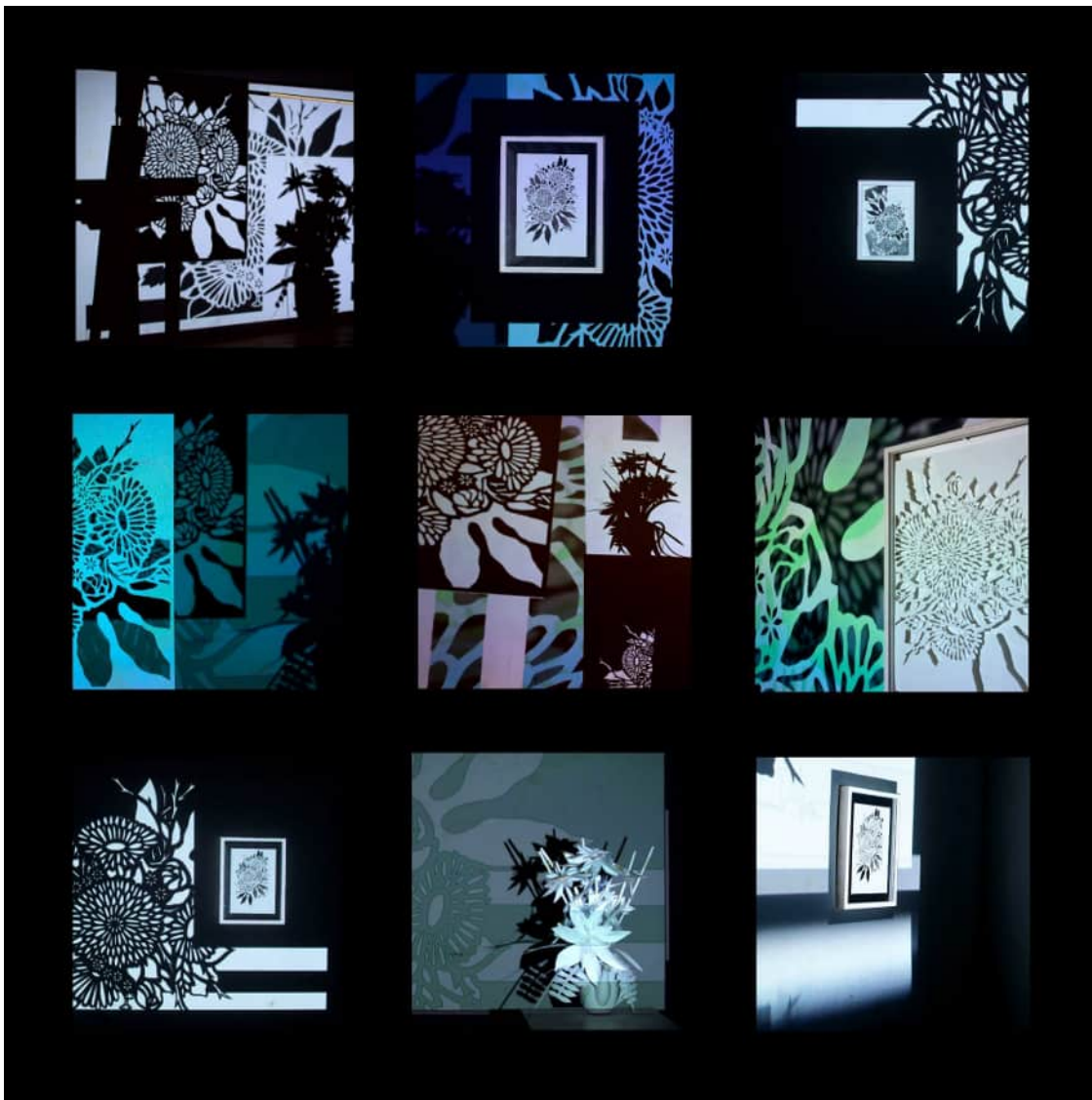
From the start, the goal of this residency was to explore these new, more current avenues. I devoted myself to evenings of experimentation in the studio where I methodically placed my cut-outs so as to stage a scene, to then capture the results through photography.

I got different results: in some cases, thanks to the magic of the framing, the interference between the physical presence of the paper and the immaterial effect of the projected light seems to blur our perception of what is tangible. I can well imagine a photographic work of this kind printed in large format on alupanel or on acrylic glass: these supports magnify the blacks and the contrasts.

During this stage of my research, video mapping lighting, initially used to enhance my installations, turned out to be a decent lighting system, in addition to offering a range of options, particularly in terms of movement. and color. Increasingly fascinated by light and the way it intervenes with the cut-outs, I wanted to think about the possibility of using it in a context of diffusion, a question of initiating a broader questioning on the space of exhibition and to inhabit it in a multidisciplinary way.



VIDEO MAPPING AS A LIGHTING SYSTEM



Through a series of tests, I asked myself the question: is it conceivable to offer an exhibition combining 2D and 3D works in a dark environment and to light it up using video mapping? And if so, what are the possible possibilities and visual fallout.

I am convinced that it would be possible to mount an exhibition of this kind. First, the dramatic effect of a dark room is not negligible. Two, the process will add an infinity of possibilities: the light can be colored, textured. It could even be in motion in the space between the material works, thus creating a new dynamism, a new experience of the exhibition space by animating it. Arousing new senses, the experience would contrast with the usual idea of an exhibition hall where everything is static, calm and bright.

LINOCUT PRINTS



Among one of the new avenues I wanted to explore, linocuts turned out to be promising. The simple and meaningful process in my artistic approach represents an efficient way to produce more and partition the cost of my works, making my work accessible to a wider clientele. I will definitely use this technique or wood engraving for future projects.

THE FOLLOWING

In line with my research undertaken in Linz, I imagined an exhibition project bringing together different representations of bouquets of significant flowers and bouquets sculpted in paper in a dark room illuminated by video mapping.

WAS-IS-WILL

Harbingers of spring, the flowers give us a glimpse of milder days. This is in the first degree the theme of this exhibition project. But much more than the simple wish for a rosier future, it is a call for more human values. There are different reasons to give flowers: thanks, congratulations, sympathy, love. In all cases, they reflect a sincere emotion filled with empathy, compassion and dedication. However, the values that this gesture implies are unfortunately often lacking in our globalized societies and, in these troubled times when we all need each other to face the challenges to be met, I consider it important to put them into star. Putting forward the best that humans have to offer.

The title of the project, WAS-IS-WILL, refers to the universal and timeless symbol of the gesture of offering flowers, but also to the different circumstances surrounding the gesture: in honor of a deceased loved one, out of love or good wishes (present), for a birth (future). In the center, a colossal cluster of handcrafted paper flowers fills the space. The darkness of the room and the directional lighting allow the shadows of this mass to spread towards the walls.

These carry different representations of flowers, bouquets, offered by the artist to these loved ones in different circumstances. The titles, evocative of the stories behind the blends, will testify to these gifts:

Photography on acrylic glass or alupanel

Linocut:

Cut sheet of paper

Video mapping

Wood carving by laser cutter

In any case, the superimposed sculpture and the presence of positive and negative spaces are featured, as usual in my sculptural work. In the elaboration of the corpus, I will use the plans as a stencil and the light as an immaterial paint.

This project will occupy my time for the next year and will improve along the way. I am hopeful of finding an exhibition space interested in spreading it, but first I need to undertake the body of work in a meaningful way in order to be able to sell it. This creative process will be marked by learning the different software needed to produce a moving mapping.