

**ANNE-MARIE DEHON**

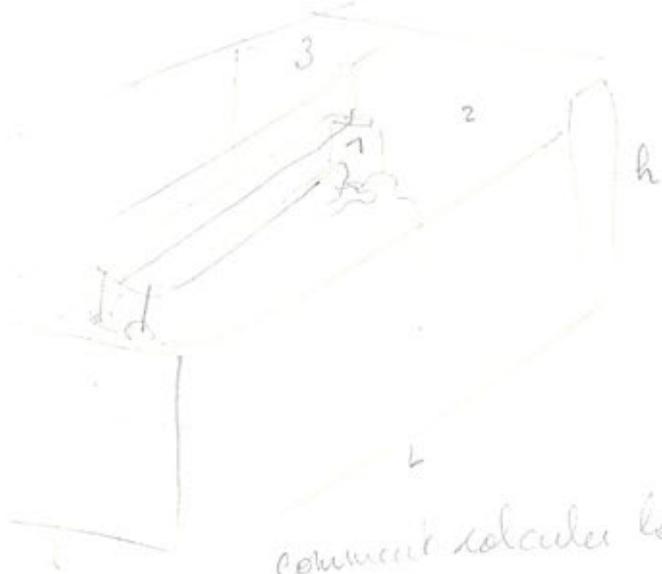
Love, Nature and Porcelain: Invitation To a Cruise

Along a Neo-Rococo Motif

**LOVE, NATURE AND PORCELAIN: INVITATION TO A  
CRUISE ALONG A NEO-ROCOCO MOTIF.**

Fondjony bus - 26/10/2023

27/10/2023 - Faire le moule négatif de nos  
moulages de sable.



pour avoir les  
à km  
à l'at

Comment calculer le  $\varnothing$  de  
plâtre si ce

1 part de colle pour 1,5 part de plâtre en volume

calculer le volume :

$$l \times L \times h = .x. l$$

⇒ calcul part de colle

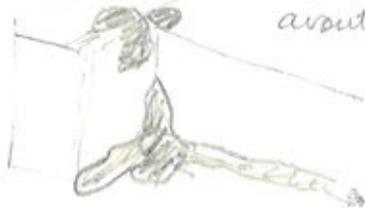
ça a marché! Ü.

Après ad'hui:

→ mettre l'huile de colle sur toute la  
avant de couler le plâtre & mettre

enfin un  
moment  
de mon  
lab...

→ border dans le coin du moule  
avant de couler le plâtre



→ à acheter:  
des pinces  
1 palette  
un marteau

→ mettre un masque!



→ à avoir:  
la sape par le plâtre  
une chambre à air et l'aspirer sous le moule.



## FOREWORDS METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

I started incorporating research into my ceramics practice in 2015 with a project on the state of the buildings where the Courts of Justice are housed in Mons and Brussels (Be). From a visit to different buildings and trials, to the interview of clerks, I created a large ceramic piece and a video. I continued this process of creation in 2021 with my projects *Kategat-1* and the *Svalbard Cable* project. In *Kategat-1*, I investigated the materiality of an underwater internet cable installed along the seafloor between Sweden and Denmark. I read academic books and articles to better understand the material and the function of those cables, and created ceramic pieces based on this research, mixing both texts and ceramics for the exhibition.

After this experience, I felt an urge to ask myself: am I an academic researcher or a ceramicist? What is my role as an artist in the studied subject? These questions led to the *Svalbard Cable project*, which contained a video that raised my voice as an artist instead of my academic voice. Through the process, I determined that as an artist and a craftsperson (and because I am not trained as a scientist), I have the right to remain vague in my conclusions. I have the right not to submit to the rigor of the scientific method. Instead of presenting an idealized scientific process, I prefer to present my research as a journey with its own set of wishes, and measures of success.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, in his 1970 book *The Savage Mind* underlines that art is one of the few places in our society where a "savage mind" remains in opposition to structured scientific research.<sup>1</sup> I prefer to translate the original title into "wild thinkings" to avoid the colonialist connotation of the word savage. Wildness is understood here as the outside of a structured scientific research process that would start with one question, follow a structured scientific method, and finish with a conclusion.

1. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, 5. impress (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press [u.a.], 1970).

As the process of creating is situated both in my studio and in books and investigations, how then to share it with the audience? My work, during the process of researching, is situated at different places. I can map it from academic readings, literature and art history, as well as in my studio, with all the knowledge and craft developed during ten years of practice. How then do I tell it? What are the right narratives to tell?

2. Eva Lacour, *Geo-Aesthetical Discontent: Svalbard, the Guide and Post-Future Essayism* (Göteborg: University of Gothenburg. Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts, 2022), 1.

The goal of the current project, which is the focus of this text, is to further develop my role as a mediator. I am borrowing from Eva Lacour the idea that the artist-researcher can work as a guide. In her Ph. D. thesis, she tells us how the guide can be seen "as a figure that embodies how skilled practicing – and hence affect, sensibility and care – are intrinsic to questions of mediation."<sup>2</sup> The task of the text is to mediate to the reader the process of an artistic research project. It works a bit like a guide in a museum: presenting works of art and mixing art history with anecdotes, addresses to the audiences, my own feelings, etc. The research has been processed both through my practice as a ceramicist and my investigation in ceramic history, but also through my affects and sensibilities.

3. Natalie Loveless, *How to Make Art at the End of the World: A Manifesto for Research-Creation* (Durham ; London: Duke University Press, 2019), 27.

Natalie Loveless in her book *How to Make Art at the End of the World* says, "it is in allowing ourselves to be drawn by our loves, our intensive and extensive curiosities, attentive to what and whom we are driven to explore, and examining the complex web of relations that we inherit thereby, that we might inhabit research questions ethically."<sup>3</sup> By reading it, I wish to add to the method of guiding curiosity and love. It is the word "cruise" used by matt lambert that helps me to gather those ideas.

In their article in magazine studio lambert writes: "It is not about getting to a destination, but it is the journey and navigation that should be enjoyed. It is a way to remove an ending and beginning from a show, it creates an open

endedness that visitors can take with them and connect what they have experienced to things outside of the gallery walls.”<sup>4</sup> The term ”cruise” summarizes the ideas of guiding developed by Lacour as well as the invitation of Loveless to be driven by curiosity and love by adding an erotic dimension to it.

I relate to the idea of erotism defined by Audre Lorde:” The erotic is a measure between the beginnings of our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings”.<sup>5</sup> Adding to the definition of guiding<sup>6</sup> an erotic dimension by using the idea of a cruise, gives to research and mediation a convergence of chaos and strong feelings that makes me go forward, and gives me pleasure and joy in creation.

And I hope, through this text, I communicate this creative impulse to the reader.

4. matt lambert, ”Provocations: Craft Beyond The Binary” *Studio: Craft and Design in Canada*, Vol 17. No.2 (2022).

5. Audre Lorde, Uses of the Erotic: *The Erotic as Power*, Out & out Pamphlet (Freedom, Calif: Crossing Press, 1978), 23.

6. Eva Lacour, *Geo-Aesthetical Discontent: Svalbard, the Guide and Post-Future Essayism* (Göteborg: University of Gothenburg. Faculty of Fine, Applied and Performing Arts, 2022).



Digital collage, Anne-Marie Dehon, 2024.



## INTRODUCTION

The grass is green. The sky is blue. The man sits higher than the woman. She wears a pink dress, with a brown top. He wears an orange cape with a blue trouser.

This pattern is printed on a flowerpot made of porcelain that has been sitting on my desk for some time. The name of French painter Fragonard is painted on it. While looking at the pattern, questions arise in my head: when was this motif printed? Why are there gold patterns painted around the pot? Why is the name of Fragonard painted on it? Why did I buy this pot?

This lovely scenery makes me think about the song *The Zipper* by J. Moreau. This song tells the story of a woman on a cruise, shared between her husband and her lover, who are both on the boat. The song asks how long is this situation possible? Looking at the pattern, I ask myself the same question: at what point does this situation become unsustainable? How long will the woman accept sitting in the lower position? How long will nature be green, rose and blue?

I propose to develop this text as a cruise.

A cruise can be defined as a journey without destination, with the promise of pleasure. In the following text, you will be guided along as my research project gathers different sources: readings that are feeding my thinking, as well as thoughts developed through my studio practice, and from my own life. More than trying to draw conclusions, this text maps out the research with me as a guide, the reader as a passenger, and the development of my studio work in the form of a logbook.

The logbook is a selection of quotes from my personal notebook written in my studio. It gathers notes that enlighten how—quite mysteriously I must say—research into this pattern feeds my studio work. It is also there to show the technical knowledge gathered on the way. It is there to illustrate the underlying idea that creation is driven by chaos, love, and curiosity which can lead to both successes and failures.

The essay is divided into nine sections: one for each step in the research process and for each idea that informed my journey. Within each section, there are quotes that informed my research, a text that tells the story of it, and information gathered during the process. Each section also offers the reader a quick look at the evolution of the technical work by giving them a quote from my logbook.

## SECTION 1: WHERE DOES THAT START? PETIT OBJET A.

“It becomes the *lure*.

It becomes the *object-cause of desire*, setting our stories, and thereby our words and our worlds into play.

It becomes the *thing* that keeps us digging to the other side.”

7. Natalie Loveless, *How to Make Art at the End of the World: A Manifesto for Research-Creation* (Durham ; London: Duke University Press, 2019), 82.

Natalie Loveless, *How to Make Art at the End of the World*, 82<sup>7</sup>

In a second-hand shop on the way to my studio, an object grabbed my attention: a porcelain flower pot, covered in transparent glossy glaze with two scenes depicted on it. A dancing couple is depicted on one side, and on the other side the same couple is shown talking to one another. The man sits a bit higher than the woman. The pattern appears to be printed with ceramic pigments on the glaze. The scene is bright and colorful: pink, green, blue, orange.

The two figures sit in the garden of a castle in the style of France’s Old regime. Behind the trees, there are old ruins of a gravestone, surrounded by nature. The characters wear dresses and clothes that indicate that they come



The flower pot, Photograph: Anne-Marie Dehon.

from nobility.

Around these two scenes, patterns are painted in gold. The edge of the pot is painted with the same luster.

Under the pot, there is the stamp of the factory that made it, Gefle Porslinsfabrik, and a date: 1953.

I found several pots representing the same kind of scenery, printed with the same technique, using the same color scale, and always decorated by gold patterns. The pattern varies: sometimes the woman interrupts her reading to listen to the man; sometimes the man is playing music; sometimes there is a dog laying nearby.

LOGBOOK, SEPTEMBER 2023:

ALONGSIDE THE DISCOVERY OF THIS FLOWER POT, IN THE STUDIO, IT ALREADY STARTS TO INSPIRE MY STUDIO WORK WITH ITS COLORS. I START TO DRAW IN MY NOTEBOOK SOME CABLES MOLDED IN CLAY THAT LOOK LIKE A MEDALLION. AROUND THE SKETCH THERE ARE THREE ARROWS THAT READ CABLES, FRAGONARD COLORS, GOLD”.

THE CABLE IS A METAPHOR OF OUR BLIND DESTRUCTION OF NATURE. I LIVE ON AN ISLAND NEAR GOTHENBURG (SE). I MOVED HERE TO BE NEAR BY NATURE, BUT TO LIVE HERE I NEEDED ELECTRICITY AND INTERNET TO COME TO ME THROUGH COMMUNICATION CABLES. THE ISLAND WHERE I LIVE IS MADE OF ROCK. THOSE CABLES ARE EMBRACING THE ISLAND, SERPENTING ON THE ROCKS ALL AROUND, COMING FROM THE SEA.

## SECTION 2: A STORY WITHIN A STORY, WITHIN A STORY, ETC.

Why did this object catch my attention?

First, because I am interested in the representation of nature in the rococo and neo-rococo eras in the ceramic industry. How and why do we represent nature in such bright colors? Why is nature represented as a refuge for lovers? Why do we think that gold flowers painted on porcelain make a pot more beautiful? Why do we want idealized nature patterns in bright colors to decorate our homes?

These are the main questions that caught my attention.

But on a deeper level, it is a dual feeling of rejection and attraction that pushed me to buy this object and start exploring its history. The color scale as well as the representation of love are the source of this discomfort.

The pattern relates to many smaller, more personal questions. I am the mother of two young kids. They surround themselves with brightly colored plastic toys that are in the same color palette as the one painted on the flowerpot. To me, those colors are the antithesis of good taste. I then ask myself: How can I include in my work colors that my kids like? Why are there certain colors I should hate or love? Is clay colored with bright pigments bad? Do colors have meaning by themselves?

One of the reasons why I dislike those colors is because they relate to plastic material. And for me, plastic means toxic for nature. But are there good or bad ways to color nature in images? Are there good or bad ways to depict nature? Why?

Finally, why does the industry choose to recreate this pattern? And why was it popular in this period?

To answer those questions, I decide to continue digging into the history of this pattern.

LOGBOOK, 13/10/2023:

I WANT TO MAKE MOLDS OF CABLES IN NATURE THAT ARE AROUND ME ON THE ISLAND. BY DOING THAT, I WANT TO DOCUMENT THE DESTRUCTION OF NATURE THAT MY SETTING UP HERE NECESSITATES. THE CABLES ARE EMBRACING ROCKS, PLANTS ARE GROWING ON THEM. LIKE IN A LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP REPRESENTED BY FRAGONARD. ONE IS POISONING THE OTHER BY ITS MICRO-PLASTIC RESIDUES WHILE THE OTHER IS MAKING ROOTS ON IT. I WANT TO DO IT IN A GOOD WAY, AND FIND A GOOD TECHNIQUE. BUT THE FIRST TRY OUT IS A MESS, PLASTER POURS OUT OF THE MOLD, AND IS STUCK ON THE ROCK.” OBJECTIVE OF THE DAY:

MAKE A MOLD OF A MOLD, FROM A CABLE IN MY SURROUNDING. TAKE TIME TO MAKE A GOOD PLASTER MOLD. NEXT TIME: PUT CLAY IN A ICE CREAM POT, AND POUR PLASTER DIRECTLY IN IT. RECTIFY ANGLES TO BE SURE THAT PLASTER GET OUT OF THE MOLD AFTERWORD. TO DO NEXT TIME: TRY TO MIX PIGMENTS TO REACH COLORS OF THE PATTERN"

### SECTION 3: THE SKY IS BLUE, THE GRASS IS GREEN, BUT IT IS THE END OF THE SUMMER.

*When a man gets stuck  
In a zipper  
Of a low-cut dress  
He's not proud*

*When a disheveled woman  
Struggles against that zipper  
And you catch them  
What to conclude (...)*

Jeanne Moreau, *The Zipper*<sup>8</sup>

8. Jeanne Moreau, *La fermeture éclair*,  
trans. Anne-Marie Dehon (1966).

On the pattern, one can read the signature-like name: Fragonard. This name refers to Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732 - 1806), a French old-regime painter famous for his romantic and *scenes galantes* (*nobility scenes*) paintings. He was working mainly for the king and his court. His paintings often have a double-sided representation of love, between eroticism, attraction, and rejection.

But the pattern represented on the pot has nothing to do with Fragonard's paintings. The romantic scenery represents pure and happy hetero-romantic love. On another object is depicted a similar pattern of a loving young couple without any concerns, the woman stopped reading, seemingly interrupted by the man. He sits a bit higher than her, playing music, and she is listening to him. The only shadow in the scenery is in the colors of one small tree that show that it is the end of the summer. Its leaves start to be red, otherwise the sky is blue, trees are blooming.

There is nothing about rejections or eroticism in this scenery. Why then is the name of Fragonard written on it? How can such a representation completely washed from any tension, any eroticism or rejection, be referring to this painter?

I am not saying that the representation of love in Fragonard's paintings is more adequate than the one represented in the pot. For example, Fragonard's painting *Le Verrou* (1776), represents a man closing the door of a bedroom while the woman in his arms is obviously showing opposition.<sup>9</sup> This erotic representation rests on the idea that the woman saying "no" to a sexual relation is actually thinking the opposite, obviously leading to a rape. Nevertheless, the love represented in the neo-rococo scene is not desirable because of an accepted and not less fantasized male dominated love relationship.

That being said, the painted name of Fragonard helps me nevertheless to think that the pattern is from France. But how could that pattern come from France's old regime to the ceramic industry in Sweden in the 20th century?

LOGBOOK, 16/10/2023:

IN MY STUDIO, I GO BACK TO THE IDEA OF A CRUISE. WHAT ARE THE TEXTURES OF IT? WHAT ARE MY PROMISES OF PLEASURE IN MATERIALS AND COLORS? WITH WHICH PIGMENTS CAN I MAKE THOSE COLORS AND TEXTURES? I WRITE:

"I THOUGHT THAT I COULD GATHER DIFFERENT TEXTURES AND MATERIALS, THE ONES THAT ARE SHAPING MY CRUISE. SOMETHING IN BETWEEN EROTISM, WISHFUL NATURE AND BEAUTY IN A PLASTIC ENVELOPE. GOLD, TEENAGE LOVE IN COMFORT WITHOUT QUESTIONS. BUT IT IS THE END OF THE SUMMER. (...)

TO REACH THE COLORS OF THE PATTERN, I WILL MIX THE FOLLOWING PIGMENTS: TURKOS AND DJUPRÖD; DJUPRÖD AND RÖD; SOLGUL AND TURKOS; SOLGUL AND DJUPRÖD." I NOTE "ONE MUST MIX COLORS WITH A MEDIUM OTHERWISE COLORS GO AWAY TOO EASILY."

9. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, 'Le Verrou', Oil on canvas, 1776 (Le Louvre, Paris), <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010064766>.

## SECTION 4: TO UNPACK THE PATTERN

To understand better how this pattern referencing Fragonard was adopted by the Swedish Gefle industry, I reached out to porcelain museums: Läns museet Gävleborg (Se), Adrien Dubouché that gathers the collection Limoges industry (Fr) and Sèvres (Fr). I wanted to know if they knew something about this pattern, and if they have related pieces in their museum.

10. email correspondence with the author, September 2023.

The Läns museet Gävleborg that houses the Gefle industry collection (Se) informed me that this specific neo-rococo pattern is named “Rokoko.” They told me that it would have been bought from some factory in Germany that sold copper-transfers for ceramics. About the question “why this scenery?” They answered that “love is always good to sell objects.”<sup>10</sup> They have only one pot with this pattern in their collection.

I have found this same pattern many times on porcelain objects in second-hand shops. Sometimes the pieces have stamps on the bottom but sometimes they do not. With these marks, I am able to trace the pattern to Germany in Bavaria, and in France, from the industry of Limoges and of Sèvres.

When I ask in Limoges and Sèvres if they have pieces in their collection with similar patterns, they have no traces of them in museums or in collections. In the central library of Gothenburg (Se) there are many books depicting porcelain patterns from Sweden and Germany. But this pattern is absent, never represented. The absence of this pattern in museums or in historical records of porcelain while it is so well represented in second hand shop’s shelves indicates to me that the pattern was very popular, but that the industries did not take any pride in it.

LOGBOOK, 25/10/2023:

”I TRY TO MAKE PLASTER MOLDS IN A GOOD WAY, TO REPRODUCE COLORS. A SUCCESS? ESPECIALLY A LOT OF FAILURES: DO AGAIN, NOTICE THAT IT IS NOT AS EASY AS EXPECTED. PLASTER OVERFLOWS, RUNS EVERYWHERE. WISHING TO BE DELIVERED AT HOME. NOT TO BE DELIVERED. HAVE TO GO UNDER THE RAIN, AFTER ONE HOUR AND A HALF IN A BUS TO A REMOTE INDUSTRIAL AREA. ARRIVING THERE: NOT HAVING THE BOOKING NUMBER. TRY TO CONVINCE THE SALESPERSON TO GIVE IT TO ME ANYWAY. SHE GIVES IT TO ME: 26 KILOS OF PLASTER TO BRING BACK TO MY STUDIO IN A BUS. I LOOK LIKE A HOMELESS PERSON. I WAS CONTROLLED IN THE BUS.”

## SECTION 5: FRAGONARDISES

How can we understand the popularity of the pattern as well as its absence from art history? I feel that the absence of something also has a meaning, and so I keep on with my investigation.

11. Jean-Pierre Cuzin and Dimitri Salmon, *Fragonard: Regards Croisés* (Paris: Mengès, 2007).

The museum Adrien Dubouché which houses the Limoges porcelain industry collection informed me that the pattern is not inspired by Fragonard, but inspired by the painter François Boucher from the same period. They send a chapter of the book *Fragonard: Regards Croisés* written by the art historians Jean-Pierre Cuzin and Dimitri Salmon.<sup>11</sup> (I do not know how this information helps me to better understand the motif, but I write it anyway in my notes.)

In this book, I learn that the so-called *fragonardises* (images inspired by Fragonard) have been very popular in the porcelain industry throughout Europe. Fragonard never worked himself in a porcelain company, but popularized its *scenes galantes*. Those sceneries have started to be represented on rococo ceramics. This period of ceramic became popular again in different times later, like in the 20th century with the so-called neo-rococo period.

With this information, I feel lost in references. How does it matter to know if the neo-rococo pattern is actually inspired from Fragonard or from Boucher? There is a tension between the male-dominated violent representation of love in Fragonard paintings, and the male-dominated peaceful accepted relation of



Color experiments before firing. Photograph: Anne-Marie Dehon

Mold of a cable in nature, first failed try out. Photograph: Anne-Marie Dehon.





First mold experiment, photograph: Anne-Marie Dehon.

The kiln is set up, photograph: Anne-Marie Dehon.



the neo-rococo pattern. By writing the name of Fragonard on the neo-rococo representation can be a way for the company to look for credibility from the *fragonardise* trend in love representation.

I cannot avoid making another link between the two representations of love: there is not such a long distance between the accepted peaceful relationship of the neo-rococo pattern and the erotic phantasm of the violent scene of rape. It can be that the reference to Fragonard is actually adding an erotic dimension to this peaceful image of love. Was the designer searching to add some phantasm to it by faking the signature of Fragonard? Or were they looking for some kind of legitimacy?

LOGBOOK, 27/10/2023:

TO BE ABLE TO MAKE MY CONTEMPORARY FRAGONARDISE—A MOLDED CABLE PAINTED IN ROCOCO COLORS—I NEED TO GO THROUGH VERY PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON HOW TO MIX PLASTER TO MAKE A MOLD. IT IS STILL FAR AWAY FROM BEING SEDUCTIVE. AT THE MOMENT, IN MY STUDIO, I AM STRUGGLING WITH PLASTER AND A MOLD OF CABLE THAT DOES NOT SATISFY ME. I WRITE:

"HOW TO CALCULATE THE NECESSARY QUANTITY OF PLASTER TO MAKE A MOLD? 1 PART OF WATER FOR 1.5 PARTS OF PLASTER IN VOLUME (L). CALCULATE A VOLUME: L X L X H = X LITERS (CALCULATION FOR X LITERS OF WATER). IT WORKS! I LEARNED TODAY: TO PUT COCONUT OIL ON THE WHOLE PIECE BEFORE POURING PLASTER AND CLAY. TO BRING TO THE STUDIO NEXT TIME: A PLASTER GRATER, AND A WORN INNER TUBE TO TIGHTEN MOLDS."

## SECTION 6: FROM THE ROCOCO TO THE NEO-ROCOCO: THE REPRESENTATION OF NATURE

The term Rococo comes from the French word *rocaille*. A *rocaille* is a landscape composition in a garden that mixes stones and wildflowers to compose, in my perception, a wild-controlled landscape, or a pleasurable, bewildered garden.

It is needed at this point to define what I understand as "wild" and "nature." I use the term "nature" to refer to elements that are neither human, nor created by humans. Nature can be clay, trees, birds, animals, stones, etc. The term "wild" refers to my understanding of nature that is untouched and uncontrolled by humans: undomesticated animals, a sea, a primary forest, etc.

In the rococo style, the patterns are often inspired by nature and mix a variety of natural elements: flowers, leaves or patterns inspired by sea like waves, and seashells.<sup>12</sup> The generation of La Duchesse de Pompadour—who led the aesthetic taste in France during this period—is reading Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The author of the *Rêveries D'un Promeneur Solitaire*, which thinks about nature as a refuge for humans against the corruption of society.

Through my research, I started to understand that the use of rococo style in decorative objects brings the wildness of nature, untouched by humans, into domestic space. In Rococo porcelain, the handle shapes are often references to a stormy sea. This style seems suddenly to me full of fieriness, erotism, wildness, and a desire to go back to nature. In a chapter of the book *Rococo: The Continuing Curve*, the author explains the revival of the style in mid-20 century as a symbol of legitimacy and cultural distinction for elite and bourgeoisie.<sup>13</sup>

Returning to my object, it seems indeed that the so-called "rococo" pattern of the 20th century has omitted any dangerous wildness, any attraction in representation of nature and love. In comparison with the first rococo period led by the Sèvres and Meissen industry, the shapes of the objects are polished, the handles have vaguely a shape of wave, the printed patterns are mediocre. The wilderness has abandoned any feeling of danger.

LOGBOOK, 07/11/2023:

"DEMOLDING IS A SUCCESS! I FINALLY SUCCEEDED IN HAVING A NEARLY DRY MOLD MADE OF PLASTER. THE MOLD IS OPENED, WONDERFUL! I RECTIFIED THE EDGES WITH A WET SPONGE. I CAREFULLY TOOK OFF TRACES OF MOLDS WITH A KNIFE AND A SPONGE. AFTERWARD, I COLORED THE MOLD WITH A BID BRUSH: PIGMENTS AND A LOT OF WATER!"

12. Sarah Coffin and Cooper-Hewitt Museum, eds., *Rococo: The Continuing Curve, 1730-2008*, 1st ed (New York, NY: Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum : Distributed by Assouline Pub, 2008), 16.

13. *Ibid.*, 17.

## SECTION 7: IT IS NOT FORBIDDEN TO DREAM.

"So far, there is no law against dreaming"

14. Winnie Mandela, Anne Benjamin and Mary Benson, *Part of My Soul Went with Him*, 1st American ed (New York: Norton, 1985).

Winnie Mandela, *Part of my soul went with him*<sup>14</sup>

I can easily imagine the family who owns a neo-rococo porcelain cup inviting some friends at the tea time in the garden. They bring coffee served in cups where this perfect happiness has been drawn on: young lovers are sitting in a back garden of a castle, they appear not to have any problems with money. Nature is a refuge to their early love. The only shadow on the scenery is the indication that the end of the summer is coming soon.

The depiction could be a representation of who this couple wishes to be, or how the family would like to show themselves: a perfect loving heteronormative family, without any money problems. Nature seems secondary to the scenery for love. Wildness itself is shaded away in pastel colors.

I understand now why my curiosity is triggered by this pattern. It represents for me the opposite of a feminist view of love but it is completely assumed: without any doubt of their happiness, the woman interrupts her reading to listen to the young man that is sitting upon her.

At this point in my journey, I ask myself: can we still have such a dream today? This pattern from the shelf of a second hand shop does not have the same meaning for me now that it could have had in the past. It seems to me like a cute but old fashioned pattern, an undesirable dream for today. If I would have it in my home, it would be more for its colors, to add some vintage old-fashioned image of an ironic dream that has no place anymore today.

In my mind, a sentence is repeating constantly. . . "But it is not forbidden to dream", "But it is not forbidden to dream" . . . The problem is certainly not to dream, we all have the right to dream. We are free to dream in whatever colors we want. But what catches my attention is nevertheless the shadow of the dream: there is something fake in it. Winter will come soon, and with it the issue of money and of equality in relationships: will the woman accept all of her life to be interrupted in her readings to listen to her partner? Will nature be a refuge forever while the sea is rising?

LOGBOOK, 29/11/2023:

IN MY STUDIO AS WELL I ALLOW MYSELF TO DREAM: "FINALLY A MOMENT IN MY STUDIO: A SHORT MOMENT THAT I WOULD LIKE TO BE LONGER. I HAVE A LOT OF WORK ON MY COMPUTER: WRITING APPLICATIONS, ORGANIZING A TRIP TO GERMANY FOR A RESEARCH PROJECT, AND PREPARING MY CLASSES. I LEARN A LOT, IT IS VERY RICH, BUT I WOULD LIKE TO BE MORE IN MY STUDIO, ALONE WITH MY TOOLS, MY MOLDS, MY COLORS AND ONLY DO."

## SECTION 8: L'EMBARQUEMENT POUR CYTHÈRE.

*Free as a bird and joyfully my heart  
Soared up among the rigging, in and out;  
Under a cloudless sky the ship rolled on  
Like an angel drunk with brilliant sun.*

*"That dark, grim island there—which would that be?"  
"Cythera," we're told, "the legendary isle  
Old bachelors tell stories of and smile.  
There's really not much to it, you can see."*

15. Charles Baudelaire, *Le Départ Pour*

Charles Baudelaire, *A trip to Cythera*<sup>15</sup>

While thinking about the question of if the nature will be a refuge for the lovers forever or not, I look to the famous *scene galante* painted by French painter Watteau titled *The Embarcation for the Island of Cythera*. I love this painting that is precisely from the period of the first porcelain industry that interests us in this research.

Watteau predates Fragonard by 50 years. His painting shows groups of people leaving for a trip to the mythological island of love: Cythera. The French poet Baudelaire wrote a poem about this painting and describes in a beautiful way how the scenery is joyful, despite the fact that the island in the background is black. A certain feeling of death is floating within the whole painting. It is summer, but autumn is coming soon...

(On the right side of the painting, there is one couple that is sitting near a tree, the man is dressed in orange and blue, the woman is wearing a pink dress. In the tree is hidden a sculpture of Venus in the forest. Could that be the first inspiration of the pattern that triggered my attention? It seems nearly exactly the same pattern. It should be that. It can be that. I do not know. It is actually impossible to know. But it can be! This would mean the neo-rococo pattern is not inspired by Boucher, nor Fragonard but by Watteau instead!)

LOGBOOK, 13/12/2023:

NOW THAT MY FIRST MOLDS IN PORCELAIN ARE DONE. I HAVE TO PAINT, GLAZE AND FIRE THEM: "TO PAINT WITH PIGMENTS ON PORCELAIN: I READ SOMEWHERE THAT AN OLD METHOD CONSISTS OF MIXING PIGMENTS WITH SUGAR. I TRY 1/3 SUGAR + 2/3 WATER, BOIL UNTIL DILUTION. MIX DIRECTLY WITH PIGMENTS. IT WORKS VERY WELL, BUT MIX A BIT WITH GLAZE WHEN THERE ARE MORE PIGMENTS. I START THE KILN BEFORE I LEAVE. WHEN I LEFT THE STUDIO, I NOTICED A STRANGE SMELL OF CARAMEL IN THE WHOLE PLACE. WHERE DOES THIS SMELL COME FROM? THE SUGAR MIXED WITH PIGMENTS. THEY ARE NOW IN THE CERAMIC KILN... OH, NO...."

## SECTION 9: EROS IS THE SON OF CHAOS.

The term Rococo has been used at the end of the 18th century to criticize the decadence of the Baroque style, and what was called "a dangerous feminization of paintings and of aesthetic."<sup>16</sup> In this context, the feminine was categorized by the density of decorative styling and delicate colors.<sup>17</sup> What was perceived as subversive in this "dangerous feminization" is the use of it for power and status.<sup>18</sup> This style was threatening the established patriarchal power, and the way masculinity had to be depicted to protect its power.

The same color palettes are used in neo-rococo patterns of the mid-20 century, but without any subversiveness. Any ambiguity is washed away from the represented love: no decadent feeling under layers of colors. The pattern is serving an ideal of the bourgeoisie who is expecting to show their status, the women on the pattern do not show any power nor any status. They are calmly listening to the man sitting a bit higher than them. For me—married for ten years and educating two girls—this is not acceptable.

The pattern designer created a relationship between this representation of love with the one painted by Fragonard before the French Revolution. In the painting of this man, love is presented in an ambiguous eroticism, within a male-dominated relationship. For me, this dangerous representation is the dark-side of any male-dominated idea of love, should this representation be painted in pale pastel colors.

Another idea of love is nevertheless possible. Eroticism is not necessarily trapped behind the name of Fragonard. Audre Lorde reminds us that "Chaos is the father of Eros"<sup>19</sup> in Greek mythology. The chaos—or we could say "wildness"—can be the source of eroticism but not necessarily leading to rape. The erotic can be a ground power: a force of life, resistance, and love.

We live in a time of changes. The weather is warming up, and it is promising challenges to future generations. I feel that my world is in danger. I feel

*l'île de Cythère* (1855) In Rachel Hadas, *Other Worlds than This: Translations* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1994).

16. Melissa Lee Hyde, 'Confounding Conventions: Gender Ambiguity and François Boucher's Painted Pastorals', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, no. Vol. 30, No. 1 (Fall, 1996) (1996): 25–57.

17. *Ibid.*, 29.

18. Melissa Lee Hyde and Katie Scott, *Rococo echo: art, history and historiography from Chochin to Coppola*, Oxford University studies in the Enlightenment, 2014 12 (Oxford: Voltaire foundation, 2014).

19. Audre Lorde, *Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power*, Out & out Pamphlet (Freedom, Calif: Crossing Press, 1978), 25.

decadence in the way we blind ourselves to the daily destruction of nature caused by pollution. The wildness of nature is at our door. Fading this wildness into pale colors is certainly not a way to create responsibility and resilience. As much as love is a son of chaos, nature can be embraced in its beauty and its dangerousness.

I live on an island near the city of Gothenburg. By moving there, I wished to be nearer to a nature untouched by men, a refuge for meditation. By going there, I ineluctably destroy nature perhaps by touching it or through necessity for electricity and communication cables. This tension is unavoidable. By creating molds of the cables in nature, casting them in porcelain, and painting them in neo-rococo colors, I represent the decadence of this relationship to nature.

As in a love relationship: chaos exists. Can I embrace this chaos and tension instead of blinding myself? If erotism can be a strong source of life, in the same way I ask myself: Can opening consciousness up to the chaos of our relationship to nature be the base to a more responsible relationship?

LOGBOOK, 18/01/2024:

MY FIRST FIRING IS NOW FINISHED, BUT IT IS NOT THE END OF THE WORK. I AM NOT TOTALLY SATISFIED BY THE RESULTS: THE COLORS ARE TOO VAGUE, I WANT TO USE GOLD ON IT AS WELL. THE WORK HAS TO BE CONTINUED: FOLLOW THE TRENDS, CONTINUE TO FOLLOW INTUITIONS AND CURIOSITY.

IN MY NOTEBOOK I WRITE:

MAKE COLOR TESTS;  
MAKE GLAZE TESTS WITH THOSE COLORS;  
MAKE A ROCOCO HANDLE;  
FIRE AT 700 DEGREES FOR GOLD LUSTER;  
WORK ON PRESENTATION OF NARRATIVES;  
WORK ON MY TEXT;  
WHICH PICTURES FOR THE TEXT?"

Textures for the cruise, photograph: Anne-Marie Dehon.





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