

JACQUES LIMOUSIN

Wessex Mudlark

New Art Centre, Roche Court Sculpture Park

13 September – 2 November 2014

*I always had a taste, which will no doubt seem curious to you, a taste, more or less disguised,  
for waste and rubbish.*

This line from the French poet and novelist Raymond Queneau, *Les Enfants du limon*, sums up the approach and the passion of the artist Jacques Limousin. For more than fifty years, Limousin has developed a taste for rubbish, collecting and then assembling objects, finds and remains in often delightful and surprising ways, giving waste a new life as art.

The seashore has always been Limousin's favourite hunting ground and he has trawled the beaches of Le Havre, Venice and Île de Ré for flotsam and jetsam, collecting what he found on the surface of the sand. More recently he has extended the scope of his explorations to England and since the 1990s he has explored the banks of the Thames collecting the detritus of London's past. Flea Markets, streets, fields, and now eBay, are equally good resources for him. The sculptures presented here in the Artists House at the New Art Centre are the result of his most recent excursions and comprise his latest finds made in Wiltshire, walking through the park at Roche Court and on a visit to Wessex Archaeology.

The sculptures are typical of the general framework of Limousin's creative logic (the series of magnifying glasses, for example), with his everyday life (the earthenware plates made in Sheffield), his engineering studies (industrial waste) or with his other great passion (collecting African sculpture).

Dr Elisabeth Vitou  
Art Historian



Since the dawn of time, mankind has fashioned and altered raw materials to create meaningful objects. These objects, in turn, found themselves central to the workings of societies and in the developmental trajectory from tribes, through chiefdoms and kingdoms, to great civilisations, many came to exhibit a ritualised significance inseparable from the customs and ceremonies in which they were a key component. And we have curated for as long as we have created, treasuring selected objects of ancestors and enemies alike whilst at the same time disposing of, depositing, and discarding others with or without meaning.

With an antiquarian fetishism the centuries approaching the Enlightenment saw the drawing together of collections of both the alien and the bizarre which, in acts of conscious nationalism were migrated into the showcases of the emerging museums. Here the wider world could cast a marvelling eye upon and gaze incredulously at the mysterious forms presented to them, wondering at the lost and hidden meanings. Imagination alone was the vehicle by which such objects were associated with a narrative past and our place in the present.

Today the artefact has become the primary medium through which we explore the physical past of societies beyond text-aided horizons, as well as the worlds of those people in more immediate remembrance. Archaeologists have found ways in which to provide object-driven narratives, stories from the earth, from collections, assemblages and distributions. In the process, we have corralled objects into typologies, chronologies and catalogues. Theirs has become a narrative of processes; processes have become practices which in turn are interpreted as the rituals through which we express identity and a sense of the human self. As social scientists we have constructed cultural, economic, political and ideological paradigms for past societies, all from the cumulative evidence presented to us by objects. The findings of generations of archaeologists, be they antiquarians, excavators, mud-larkers, beach combers or hobbyist metal-detectorists, have become incarcerated in theoretical, conjectural and reconstructed pasts, themselves abstracted models of the human experience.

What the artist Jacques Limousin does is to take the found object, remove it from the dogmatic contexts of social theory, and to place it once again centre stage in the study of the human condition. For Limousin, the Artists House at Roche Court becomes his own 'cabinet of curiosities'. Here, he invites us to read off a more direct association with humankind and to see the object as a thing of beauty in its own right, in its perfect unquestionable form. In allowing mute objects to speak thus, to inspire their own narrative and to express their own sense of being, we are provided with a timely reminder that what sets humanity apart is the artefact: something taken from raw material, fashioned by the human hand, cherished and, in the final phase of its biographical trajectory, discarded.

Dr Alexander Langlands

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## LADY CHATTERLEY

*Flint, wooden base, 13 x 8 x 12 cm, 2012*

Flints often have anthropomorphic shapes, and depending on the way one looks at them, they create natural sculptures. Limousin shares an approach used by artists such as Henry Moore, Antoine Bourdelle, Auguste Rodin or Le Corbusier, all of whom collected natural objects and frequently integrated organic forms into their own works.



## LANGUE ANGLAISE / ENGLISH TONGUE

*Tile fragment collected from the Thames, polished lead sheet, old black frame with a gold-coloured net,  
24 x 16 x 5.5 cm, 2005*

This tile fragment in the shape of a tongue is used here in a literal sense to represent the act of sticking out one's tongue. The inscription 'langue anglaise', is a pun on the double definition of the French word *langue*, which means both 'tongue' and 'language', and also reminds us that the fragment was found in England on the banks of the Thames.



*Langue Anglaise*

POT PLIE

*Bronze, ed 4/8, Fonderie du Gour de Tazenat, 36 x 11 cm, 2004*

This metal element here is industrial waste which has been completely crushed; it has the appearance of a flattened vase. The title is an untranslatable play on words based on the homonymy between the French for 'folded jar' and 'Poplar' tree.



COW

*Lead cow, broken brick, wooden base, 12 x 6 x 14.5 cm, 2009*

Three capital letters are inscribed on this broken brick, fragments of the manufacturer's trademark. The toy cow was bought from Portobello Market and is stamped with 'Made in England'.



## LA VUE

*Tin figures, magnifying glass, wooden box, lead sheet, 18.5 x 14 x 13.5 cm, 2003*

This small installation is an illustration of the French writer Raymond Roussel's book, *La Vue*. In part of this poem, written in 1903, Roussel imagines in great detail what might be seen in a tiny jewel on a souvenir penholder. Roussel was not content with describing what we actually see but raises questions about the very nature of description itself. The use of the photograph and the magnifying glass operates in a similar way, altering scale and our sense of perception of another world.



## DESAMOORE

*Bones, wooden base, 19.5 x 13.5 x 16 cm, 2011*

The title plays on the homonymy between the French for the 'end of love' (*désamour*) and 'to Moore'. They are a tribute to the sculptor Henry Moore, whose interest in the anthropomorphism of bones is a source of inspiration for Limousin.



NIL

*Fragments of clay pipes, wooden box, glass mount, 59.5 x 26 x 6.5 cm, 2000*

The bowl parts of clay pipes evoke images of Egyptian Pharaohs wearing the Hedjet (the white crown of South Egypt and part of the *Pschent*) and endowed with false beards. Between the pipes are painted the letters N I L. In French, *nil* has two different meanings: it refers to the river Nile but is also a famous manufacturer of cigarette papers. The irregularities in the glass mount suggest the waters which re-conceal fragments at each tide of the Thames.



N I L

HERBARIUM 2000

## ORATION FOR THE FUNERAL OF HENRIETTA MARIA OF ENGLAND

*Box, lead sheet, brick, beaten glass mount, 52 x 21 x 11 cm, 2004*

From a fragment of brick collected in the Thames resting on a lead lining, Limousin has created a memorial for Queen Henrietta Maria of England; the capital V imprinted on the brick suggests her sex while the letter H is her initial. The daughter of Henri IV of France and Marie de Médici, Henrietta Maria returned home following the execution of her husband Charles I. At her funeral in St. Denis in 1670, the theologian and Bishop J. B. Bossuet gave a famous oration from which the words *Vanitas vanitatum, et omnia vanitas* are taken and engraved on the glass.

Oraison funèbre  
d'Henriette d'Angleterre



*Vanitas vanitatum, et omnia vanitas*

Oraison funèbre  
d'Henriette d'Angleterre



*Vanitas vanitatum, et omnia vanitas*

## CIMITERO DEGLI ELEFANTI

*Fragments of chinaware, lead sheet, box, glass mount, 35.5 x 24 x 24 cm, 2003*

Three fragments of dishes were found in the Venetian lagoon, which all have the same motif: a small stylised elephant which is the symbol of the firm Ceramica Italiana Milano. They have all been discarded in the same spot, like elephants returning to the same place to die.



## PENGUIN LOOK

*Flints, wooden base, 29 x 13 x 10.5 cm, 2014*

These two flints, which seem to address or confront each other, could come from Wiltshire. The title allows different interpretations: two birds, penguins perhaps, glaring at each other, or an allusion to Penguin Books.



## HERD OF MAMMOTHS

*Five bronzes, Fonderie du Gour de Tazenat, from 12.5 to 23.5 cm, 2002*

These mammoths were cast from moulds made from scaffolding parts which had been thrown into the Thames.



## THE PRINCE

*Three figures in bone and iron ore, wooden base, 26 x 12 x 15.5 cm, 2011*

The central character, placed between two figures, warriors perhaps, looks like an actor on stage who is ready to perform. The bones are probably horse phalanxes and recall the dress of African dignitaries.



## THE TRAVELLER

*Part of a shoe, lead sheet, box with glass mount, 39 x 30 x 6 cm, 2004*

The shape of this fragment suggests the outline of the whole shoe. For Limousin, this shoe belongs to the Traveller, who travels both in time and space. His name is beaten in the lead.



VOYAGEUR

Liensin 2004

## THE BONE

*Bone, broken brick, 38.5 x 19 x 8 cm, 2011*

The powerful presence of this large bone (*os* in French) is enhanced by the letters O and S still legible on the base. It is perhaps the femur of a horse.



## IRON MAN

*Wire, antique frame, antique glass mount, 31 x 40 cm, 2006*

Limousin collected numerous bits of wire in the street and from construction sites. Their anthropomorphic shape is heightened by the old frame and they become like sculpture, evoking the silhouette of a figure by Daumier. The use of antique glass, used frequently by Limousin, creates a blurred, more poetic effect.



Line Art 201

## LA RONDE

*Flint, wooden base, backgammon tokens, 20 x 20 x 24 cm, 2012*

The two flints are mobile on their base, allowing Limousin to reposition them and create many different relationships between the two figures.



## ICARUS

*Bone, lead sheet, reclaimed frame, 25 x 30 x 11 cm, 2000*

This *memento mori* is made from an animal kneecap shaped like a death mask and a piece of bone which suggests a wing. Removed from the frame, the wing is redolent of both flight and the fall of Icarus, just as the use of a reclaimed frame indicates the reversal of things.



## LE SCULPTEUR ET SON MODELE

*Iron ore, wooden base, magnifying glass, mobile, 14 x 13 x 19 cm, 2010*

Limousin found this vein of native iron ore at the foot of a cliff in Île de Ré. Found iron ore often has anthropomorphic or geometrical forms. Using a magnifying glass here allows the viewer to focus and to change the scale of the figures, thereby entering into the scene. Limousin also found some iron ore in meadows at Roche Court.



## THIS WAS A PIPE

*Four pieces of clay pipes, wooden box, glass mount, 35.5 x 4.5 x 10.5 cm, 1999*

The Thames disgorges many clay pipes - some pristine, some worn - discarded by countless English sailors over the centuries. Made of white clay, they remain fragile and break easily. Here several fragments have been used to reconstitute a single pipe and is a reference to Magritte's painting *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*.



## UMBILICUS

*Bronze, ed 3/8, Fonderie du Gour de Tazenat, 22 x 3 cm, 2004*

Metallic waste found in the sea was recast in bronze. Evidence of activity in a modern shipyard it also suggests an Etruscan artefact because of its classical shape. The motif on the bottom gave the work its title.



## LARGE VESSEL

*Animal jaw, black pearls, T-square, 50 x 22 x 7 cm, 2011*

This vessel refers both to the slave trade and the idea of a journey. Time spent in the muddy waters of the Thames has given the jawbone its brown patina, but the teeth have stayed in place, like sturdy oarsmen. The base is made from an architect's T-square.



## TÊTES GALLERY

*Flint, pipe, clay, bone, wooden bases, 16 to 21 cm, from 2012 to 2014*

A play of words between *tête* (head) and Tate. Limousin fits together small pieces of different materials to create or complete this set of chests.



LiMouSin in NewartcentrE

*Toy, flint, 18 x 39 x 25 cm, 2014*

This toy railway carriage of the London Midland and Scottish Railway was bought on eBay. The LMS railway company was founded on 1 January 1923 and was, at the time, the world's largest transport company. The letters LMS also suggest LiMouSin's name and NE, is both the London and North Eastern Railway and the first and the last letter of New Art Centre. The two flints have been collected in Roche Court meadows and together suggest the sculptor and his model.



PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A COLLECTOR

*Pewter figure, glass, bone, clay, stone, lead sheet, wooden base, 23 x 13.5 cm, 2012*

Twenty years ago, Limousin became fond of mudlarking in the river Thames. This work brings together many of his finds: terra-cotta, glass, clay pipes, bones and metallic waste.



JACQUES LIMOUSIN

Sculptor, architect DPLG

Professor Académie Julian Penninghen, Paris

Lives and works in Paris

### **Selected solo exhibitions**

New Art Centre, Roche Court, Wiltshire, 2014

*River works*, The Crystal, Thames Festival, September 2014

Casino Venier, Institut culturel français in Venice, Italy, 2013

*Transparences, loupes et miroirs*, Galerie L'Aiguillage, Paris 2013

Hot Art Fair, Basel, Switzerland, June 2010

Hot Art Fair, Basel, Switzerland, June 2009

*Dualité*, Galerie l'Aiguillage, Paris, 2005

*Dualité*, Galerie Brun L'Eglise, Paris, 2005

2 x 54 *sculptures-objets*, Ecole spéciale d'architecture, Paris, 1998

*Limousin*, Institut Français Tokyo, Japan, 1993

Galerie J.-P. Harter, Paris, 1991

Galerie 1900-2000, Paris, 1989

Portes ouvertes des Frigos, Paris 13, annual exhibition 1989

45 *sculptures-objets*, Ecole spéciale d'architecture, Paris, 1987

### **Selected group exhibitions**

TOOG, Ibiza, Spain, 2013

Espace Caroline Corre, château de Verderonne, 2012

Paris, Patrimoine des arts, Paris, 2010

*Les Stèles de la création*, Eglise de La Madeleine, Paris, spring-summer 2009

*Queneau / Blavier*, Musée de Verviers, Belgium, 2003

*Ombre de sièges*, Salon des Artistes Décorateurs, Carrousel du Louvre, Paris, 2002

*Histoires Naturelles*, Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris, 2002

*Hommage à Henri Michaux*, Paris, 1999

Association Florence, Paris, 1998

*En forme de poisson*, Musée Océanographique, Monaco, 1997

*Les portraits d'Ubu*, itinerant exhibition Bruxelles, Namur, Belgium, 1997

*Hommage à Raymond Queneau*, itinerant exhibition, Auxerre, Dieppe, Evreux,

Le Havre, Levallois-Perret, Villeneuve-sur-Yonne... from 1996 to 2003

*3 x 91, Limousin, Rémus, Mitrofanoff*, Chapelle de la Sorbonne, Paris, 1994

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