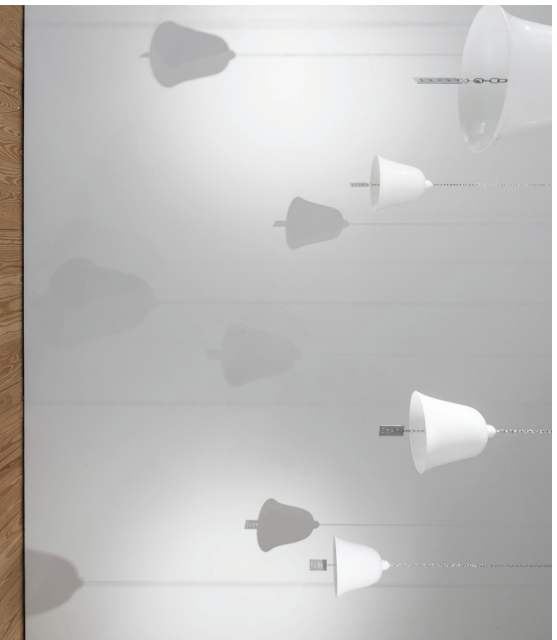


Sicardi Gallery

Marie Orensanz

... a path to share ...



Marie Orensanz, ...*In honor... of whom?* (details), 1999–2015.  
20 white opaline bells (9.5x 10.2in each) with stainless steel tags (3.1x1.8in each).  
Installation, dimensions variable.

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April 14 to  
May 30, 2015

....a path to share...

Marie Orensanz was born in Mar del Plata in Argentina. After studying with Emilio Pettoruti and Antonio Seguí, she made her appearance on the avant-garde scene in the early 1970s. Her work lies within the sphere of influence of conceptual art and is especially striking for its minimalism, its whiteness and luminosity, and, one might almost say, its immateriality. But beneath the elegant forms, the slender inscriptions and the delicate cut-outs, revolt and resistance rumble. The art of Marie Orensanz, imbued as it is with the spirit of protest, is thoroughly deceptive in appearance. A prime example is her series on poisonous flowers, *Fleurs vénéneuses*, which was first shown at the Artemúltiple gallery in Buenos Aires in 1977.<sup>1</sup> Created during the period of the military dictatorship in Argentina (1976–1983), it has a hidden meaning: the choice of a floral theme—usually equated with a demure, pretty form of women’s painting—is in fact a subversive, ironical answer to censorship. Poisonous flowers, which live in the shadow, are the symbol of free spirits threatened by repression. As Marie Orensanz recalls “the thing represented is not only the thing we see...”.

Her output, indeed, always needs attentive deciphering. From the works on paper she produced in the first half of the 1970s to her fragments of marble (from 1974 onwards), via her reliefs (1990s and 2010s), she often presents her intentions in a deliberately enigmatic form. Marie Orensanz, who always has a two-dimensional conception of space, draws a few lines with a ruler to link together pictograms, symbols borrowed from physics, strange mathematical equations, isolated words, and other elements. In one work after another, this abstract cartography builds up a visual repertory to which she has provided certain clues: thus the figure

12 refers to hours, months, the apostles, or the signs of the Zodiac; the digit 1 symbolizes a unit, while 2 means a couple; the accumulator icon expresses the accumulation of ideas; an arrow means strength and thought, but also love; 0 indicates a breakdown in communication; and a resistance connected to a ground generates creative energy. It would be futile, however, to launch into any strict interpretation of these patterns. Marie Dedieu has put it perfectly: these works propose a “new circulation of energies and forces,” they invite the viewer to follow the meanderings of the artist’s thought by embarking on a dialogue she hopes will be open and polysemous.<sup>2</sup> For Marie Orensanz never tries to impose her vision of things or a strict point of view. She prefers perception and comprehension, which take time, to the outburst of slogans or immediate visual impact. Since apprehension operates through feelings, viewers are transformed into conscious, active observers. She has said, furthermore: “I don’t believe that my works are only mine, or that they arise from a search devised by a single subject: each of us receives waves and vibrations, each of us is both receptor and transmitter.” The titles she gives her works explicitly convey this: *Transformación a través del pensamiento*, 1975 (Transformation through thought); *L’ambiance conditionne les gens*, 1974 (Atmosphere conditions people), and so on.

With her *Fragments de marbre*, Marie Orensanz makes the artwork more materially tangible and accessible. Their unfinished rawness defines new aesthetic challenges for which her 1978 manifesto *Fragmentisme* proposed a theory: “*fragmentism* seeks to integrate a part into a whole by transforming itself by means of multiple interpretations into an unfinished, unlimited object through time and through space.” The pieces of marble, with their rough contours and the truncated narratives that run across their

surfaces, seem the witnesses of past civilizations. This relationship to history, and consequently to memory, is reinforced in the *Livres de marbre*, which are lightly sketched in pastels and evoke the marble slabs of Antiquity.

In the 1980s, Marie Orensanz gave her pieces of marble a more geometrical look by assembling them like constructions, vertically in space, in a manner reminiscent of Malevich’s architectons (*condensar*, 1986). The latter’s utopian projects, which were to serve as possible starting or reference points for works of architecture, have a political and social dimension that she may have found attractive. A further allusion to the Russian constructivists is to be found in her reliefs (*circulant*, 1993), in which she arranges lineal forms cut from thin sheets of cardboard in such a way as to make use of the dynamic contrast between straight and curved, vertical, horizontal, and diagonal lines. Her latest creations reveal her interest in extending the artwork through space and time.

This becomes especially clear in installations such as *pour qui ? .... les honneurs* (1999–2009), in which the work of Marie Orensanz overflows from its frame once and for all to invade the space of the viewer. The installation consists of twenty white opaline bells hung from the ceiling at regular intervals. On one wall the question that provides the title of the work is asked: “in honour... of whom?” The tongue of each bell suggests an answer: “those who doubt,” “those who judge,” “those who think,” “those who sell.” This work, with its undisguised criticism of coercive social and political structures, signals a change of tone for Marie Orensanz. The viewer is directly addressed and thus becomes an integral part of the process of creation and presentation: he or she is invited to explore the space, to think and act, in this case by ringing the bells. By being actively and physically involved, the viewer

accompanies the artist in the memory-based approach that underpins her entire output.

Thanks to her militant humanism, Marie Orensanz has established herself as one of the foremost Latin American artists. Her poetic and social work, which is both sensitive and conceptual, possesses a great aesthetic and intellectual coherence and defies both genres and categories. By introducing signs and writing, by resorting to her own characteristic formal set-ups, she launches an open-ended dialogue, based on polysemy, which undermines our certitudes and our relationship with the world.

Domitille d’Orgeval  
Paris, March 2015

Translation by Jacqueline Hall

#### Notes

1. Three works from this series have been in the collections of the MNAM Centre Pompidou since 2009.
2. Marie Dedieu, *Des femmes en mouvements hebdo N°91*, Paris, May 1982.

## Marie Orensanz

b. 1936, Argentina

Orensanz began her career studying painting in Buenos Aires with two of the founders of Argentine Modernism: Emilio Pettoruti and Antonio Seguí. An active member of the art scene in Buenos Aires in the 1960s and 1970s, she participated in exhibitions and cultural activities organized by the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella, and she was involved with the Centro de Arte y Comunicación. In 1972, she moved to Rome and then to Milan on a Francisco Romero grant from the Italian Embassy in Argentina through their National Arts Fund. The proximity of Carrara and its marble quarries sparked her early production in stone. She has continued to work with fragments of marble, making them into books and sculptures, since the 1970s. In 1975, Orensanz moved to Paris. Three years later, she wrote a “Manifesto of Fragmentism,” in which she outlined the conceptual basis of her works, many of which are deeply informed by the practice of drawing. The manifesto reads: “Fragmentism searches for integration of a part with a totality...”.

Since the mid-1980s, Orensanz has completed numerous public works, including installations at Puerto Madero in Buenos Aires, Parque de la Memoria in Buenos Aires, the Lycée Blanc-Mesnil in Paris, the Universidad San Martín in Buenos Aires, and the Musée National des Sciences, des Techniques et des Industries in Paris. In 1983, she received a Research grant from the French Ministry of Culture. She lives and works in Paris.

Orensanz’s works are collected by numerous public institutions, including: Centro de Arte y Comunicación (CAYC), Buenos Aires, Argentina;

Colección Banco Velox, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Colección Cancillería Argentina, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Fondo Nacional de las Artes, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Rosario (MACRO), Rosario, Argentina; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Marcos Curi, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Museo de Arte Moderno, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Centro de Multimedia Internacional, São Paulo, Brazil; Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée national d’Art moderne, Paris, France; Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, France; Fond National d’Art Contemporain, Paris, France; Fondation Camille, Paris, France; Maison du Livre, de l’Image et du Son, Villeurbanne, France; Bremen Museum, Germany; Centrum für Kunst, Vaduz, Liechtenstein; and Museo de Arte Latinoamericano Contemporáneo de Managua, Nicaragua; among others.