

Bibliothèque publique d'information | Exhibition  
September 30, 2020 - January 25, 2021

# Catherine Meurisse

Life in drawing



Since her debut, Catherine Meurisse has been devoting her singular talent to comics, children's literature illustration and press cartoon. In 2005, she was the first draftsman to join the editorial team of *Charlie Hebdo*. Influenced by the Old Masters as much as by the caricaturists of the 19th and 20th century, or the cartoonists of the Seventies, she has been developing a consistently humorous work that exalts art and nature.

After the January 7, 2015 attack against *Charlie Hebdo*, autobiography emerged as an obvious and necessary endeavor. Two graphic novels ensued:

*La Légèreté* (2016) and *Les Grands espaces* (2018). Catherine Meurisse uses comics, and drawing, as a space where she can question her relationship to the world.

With Catherine Meurisse being appointed to the Academy of Arts, at last comics gained entry to the Institut de France. A timely moment to retrace her steps.

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## PART 1 A PASSION FOR DRAWING

Catherine Meurisse grew up in the countryside with her parents and sister. Very early on, drawing became one of her favorite occupations, along with the reading of *Asterix*, *Little Nicholas*, and Roald Dahl.

As a teenager, she discovered Gotlib, but also Grandville and Gustave Doré, thus building a both humorous and graphic culture. In 1993, she experienced an intense esthetic emotion when she visited the Louvre for the first time. Catherine Meurisse then shaped her personality in a whipsaw between the real nature she lived in, and the depicted nature she admired.

Weaned of art during her literary studies, in 1999 she joined the École Estienne, then the École des Arts Décoratifs. Even before completing her studies, she drew for weeklies *Charlie Hebdo* and *Les Échos*, and illustrated children's books. In 2005, Arts became a major reference in her strips, and they have been irrigating major fields of her work since.

## PART 2 A SHARP LOOK

In 2001, Catherine Meurisse won the Presse Citron trophy for best press cartoon. Several collaborators of *Charlie Hebdo* were in the jury, and the weekly published her work for the first time. She was only 21, and it was an eye-opener. She who until then had no precise idea about the professional orientation she would pursue had found her path...

Whether she illustrates other authors' texts or works alone, Catherine Meurisse never strays from her withering humor. Her curious eye catches the detail that hurts and entertains. The freedom she experienced at *Charlie Hebdo* shows in the rest of her work, where she pushes humor over the edge to disrupt conventions.

Her resistance to standards is vividly and spontaneously orchestrated, vigorously drawn, but Catherine Meurisse often shrugs off ideological, dissenting or militant aspects. Her mockery of conventions is fueled by her refusal of any constraint or indoctrination, an absolute need for freedom, and an urge to protect the right to laugh at anything, a very condition of human existence.

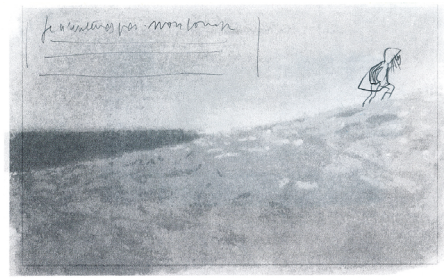
## PART 3 COMING ROUND

After the attack against *Charlie Hebdo*, drawing became physically challenging for Catherine Meurisse. She realized she needed to part from the collective identity of the satirical newspaper and talk about herself to regain herself, and piece herself back together. This reflection led to a first drawing in a notebook. One seminal drawing that was to become the cover of *La Légèreté*. For the first time, she was the core subject of the story. She incarnated herself in the drawing, no longer embarrassed to say "I". Drawing herself helped her feel alive. Art, her lifelong companion, pulled her out of chaos.

In *Les Grands espaces*, Catherine Meurisse kept demonstrating her unvarnished humanity. Her new ambition was to capture childhood memories and sensations she didn't want to ever forget. To depict that summoning of the past, she changed her graphic technique and delivered a meticulous graphite pencil work, further enhanced by colorist Isabelle Merlet. Thus started a peaceful dialogue between the author and the world.



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## PART 4

# TOWARD COLOR AND THE BEYOND

After her fiddly pencil work on *Les Grands espaces*, Catherine Meurisse came back to the artists she admires. With *Delacroix*, she invokes colored inks, gouache, and dares intense colors and texture effects. Getting back to her early work allowed her to update her esthetic approach of the world and explore new possibilities.

Far from her hectic years as a press cartoonist, throwing designs on paper as fast she could, she took up the brush, color, and big format for her collaboration with the magazine *Zadig*.

Persistent in her esthetic search, always willing to evolve without ever repeating herself, Catherine Meurisse set off to discover “oriental beauty” during a residency at the Villa Kujoyama in 2018. She traveled to the south of the island and immersed herself in the “familiar strangeness” surrounding her. She also opened up to performing arts at the invitation of the Concordan(s)e Festival, and displayed a drawn/danced performance with choreographer DD Dorvillier.





## CREDITS

### Supervising curators, Bpi

Isabelle Bastian-Dupleix and Caroline Raynaud

Assisted by Clémence Folscheid

### Angoulême curators / scientific advisory panel

Jean-Pierre Mercier and Anne-Claire Norot

### Scenography

Valentina Dodi and Nicolas Groult

### Graphic design

Claire Mineur

### Co-designed with

Angoulême International Comics Festival

With the participation of Éditions Dargaud

### Media partners

France Inter, Figaroscope, Diacritik,

Les Arts dessinés, Philosophie magazine

The Bpi warmly thanks Catherine Meurisse.

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

### Bibliothèque publique d'information

25 rue du Renard - 75197 Paris Cedex 04

+33 (0)1 44 78 43 51 - [www.bpi.fr](http://www.bpi.fr)

**Subway station:** Hôtel de Ville / Rambuteau

### Hours

Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays : 12-10pm

Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays : 11am-10pm

Closed on Tuesdays

**Access:** rue Beaubourg

Entrance through the Bpi (free), or at the main entrance of the Centre Pompidou with a « Museum and exhibitions » ticket for the day.

**You will find a selection of publications and gifts at the Flammarion bookstore of the Centre Pompidou** (Forum, level 0).

## WORKSHOPS

General public drawing workshops,

Educational image analysis workshops,

FLE workshops (French as a foreign language)

### Free and by reservation

• **Individuals:** please visit [www.bpi.fr](http://www.bpi.fr)

• **Groups and schools:** please contact [visites@bpi.fr](mailto:visites@bpi.fr)

## VISITS AND ACCESSIBILITY

### Free, guided visits, booking required

• **Individuals:** please visit [www.bpi.fr](http://www.bpi.fr)

• **Groups and schools:** please contact [visites@bpi.fr](mailto:visites@bpi.fr)

• **Visits in French sign language**

**Tuesday, November 17 • 6pm**

**Saturday, December 12 • 11am**

**Wednesday, January 13 & Saturday, January 23 • 11am**

**Contact and booking:** [lecture-handicap@bpi.fr](mailto:lecture-handicap@bpi.fr)

## RELATED EVENTS

### Monday, October 19

**Paint in the speech bubbles**

**Musical and drawn conversation between painting, literature, and comic books**

**7pm • Petite Salle • Centre Pompidou**

Whether a source of inspiration, comfort, or accomplishment, classical painting is ubiquitous in the works of Catherine Meurisse.

With artist Nejib and Cie 44, the Bpi invites comics, literature and painting to engage in dialogue, and confront their interpretations of several masterpieces of Classicism.

**With**

**La Cie 44**, Theater and music company

**Nejib**, artist

### Monday, November 2

**A long interview with Catherine Meurisse**

**7pm • Petite Salle • Centre Pompidou**

Catherine Meurisse is invited to revisit her design work during an extensive interview with literary journalist Sonia Déchamps.

An opportunity to retrace the prolific career of the comic book author, youth-literature illustrator, and press cartoonist (notably at *Charlie Hebdo* for 10 years), whose work is resolutely open to the world, and deeply inspired by literature and fine arts.

**Hosted by**

**Sonia Déchamps**, Artistic co-director of the Angoulême International Comics Festival

### Monday, January 11, 2021

**Comics-Concert: about the work of Catherine Meurisse**

**7pm • Petite Salle • Centre Pompidou**

Actors and musicians gather to bring an artwork by Catherine Meurisse to life. Enjoy an outstanding party, and discover bande dessinée in a new light!

# EXHIBITION PLAN

