

# **SOMA ANDERS**

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**ROMAIN KRONENBERG  
& HIS CHARACTERS**

# **Boaz**

**EXHIBITION CATALOGUE  
LA KUNSTHALLE MULHOUSE**

**11.02.22 — 30.04.22**

*Boaz* exhibition at La Kunsthalle Mulhouse is the second stage in the development of this by essence unfinished project.

**1/** The first step of the project has taken place in May 2021 at Galerie Sator – Romainville, where were exhibited the eponymous novel's characters' artworks : Malachie's dolls, his drawings – the stars, his photographs of the crosses on the walls of the Procida island, Deborah's photo album and her drawings, Malachie and Boaz's film as well as my own film, built on Boaz's images.

**2/** At La Kunsthalle Mulhouse, most of these artworks are exhibited again along with – and for the first time, the after-Boaz and the appropriation – the celebration of Boaz's legendary character by the community once he has disappeared, through :

- ◇ a series of conversations with the two survivors, Deborah and Amos, by Emmanuelle Lequeux, Anne-Laure Chamboissier, Sandrine Wymann, Marie Chênél, Coline Davenne & Ami Barak ;
- ◇ some audio documents – archives of Deborah's interrogations ;
- ◇ artworks celebrating the legend : a monolith, a clock, some posters and portraits.

**3/** *Boaz's* third step, work in progress, will show the journey of a young man, born long after Boaz's disappearance and having not known the legend but through its appropriation – autoritary and administrative, so he thinks – wishing to destroy it to set free.

*We all have our way of dressing up destiny. And we all knew what would happen. Because that was Boaz's destiny; dying to fulfill the legend. From the very first day, we knew what would happen. Because a legend cannot live. And the first to know, after his parents, was him. Obviously. Throughout all these years, we tried to act as though... No, I shouldn't say that, we were a family. A happy family. Bonded by love, but also by silence. The precious silence around what would one day happen, necessarily. The type of silence whose outline defined all the rest, everything we did say, everything we experienced. Always like it was the last time.*

*Malachie? His heart was on fire. He was always the most turbulent one. With him I accepted as much as I renounced. Accepted the excess and renounced him. I let him leave. It's a difficult thing to do. It isn't human to not hold back one's beloved son when he goes.*

*With Deborah it was different. She never really wanted to face it, but in the bottom of her heart, through her gentleness, she also said that she accepted. Ever since it happened, she comes to see me every day. Every day she brings me something to eat. The anniversary days are the most difficult...*

*The first time I saw Boaz, his small face peeking out from beneath the covers in the baby carriage... I saw something tragic in his face. This must be why I loved him so much. Just as one projects one's own fear of emptiness into the crack one sees in another. And through this crack we access the inaccessible. That small boy who became a young man was a crack whose depths no one could resist. No one did resist. "But you know, I am there, even when I am far away." That was the last thing he said to me.*

Statement by Amos when he was 80 years old

«Boaz è mio fratello. L'ho conosciuto alla scuola materna. Non mi ricordo bene, ma mio padre ci ha sempre raccontato che eravamo inseparabili già da bambini. Quello però che mi ricordo bene – e credo sia il mio primo ricordo – è Roma ; il bancone del negozio di alimentari. Mio padre che sta lavorando. C'è anche mia sorella, ed io che aspetto. Aspetto che Boaz arrivi. Credo sia inverno, perché fa freddo. Nell'attesa, io disegno. A un certo punto vedo la sua faccia attraverso la vetrina. Boaz tiene la mano di sua madre e mi fa un sorriso. Sua madre spinge la porta. La campanella suona – posso ancora sentire quel suono nella mia testa – e Boaz s'intrufola dietro il bancone. Mio padre lo acchiappa, lo solleva a braccia tese e lo avvicina al suo viso. Boaz lo abbraccia poi mio padre lo fa sedere al posto vicino al mio. Lo bacio e disegniamo insieme per tutta la giornata.

«Mi ricordo anche di quel maledetto giorno in cui una donna venne a prenderlo mentre era a casa nostra. Disse a mio padre che i suoi genitori erano morti, e lo portò via. I suoi genitori erano persone meravigliose. Erano amati da tutti. Lo sapete tutti, che erano meravigliosi. Come lo è anche Boaz. Poi, poco tempo dopo, quella stessa donna lo riportò a casa, affidandolo a mio padre. Da quel giorno viviamo sempre fianco a fianco.

«Qui siamo a Procida. Perché è estate, e come ogni estate veniamo qua. A Procida siamo ancora più di quello che siamo, perché nulla ci separa e mai ci separerà, sappiatelo ! A Procida potrete vedere croci su quasi tutti i muri e tutte queste croci dicono che tutti amano Boaz. Ma ho promesso di non dire altro, altrimenti nessuno lo amerà mai quanto me.

«Io conosco il Boaz che va al mare, quello che dorme vicino a me e che piange tra le mie braccia. Di questo, lui è d'accordo che ne parli, ma del resto, di quello che sapete voi, non vuole.

«Ovunque si trovi Boaz, le persone sono attratte da lui. Se avete passato un momento con lui in spiaggia, avrete visto la gente che si raggruppa a stella intorno a lui. Se siete mai stati a fare compere con lui, avrete visto la coda che si crea dietro di lui. Mai troppo vicino, mai troppo a lungo. Con la stessa garbatezza che lui ha per loro. È bellissimo.

«All'inizio, quando tutto è iniziato, ero un pò geloso. Invidiavo le persone che avevano a che fare con mio fratello. Ma oggi, sono soprattutto riconoscente che la vita ci abbia fatto incontrare. Che ci abbia portato qui. Se amiamo così tanto i momenti trascorsi sull'isola, è perché qui tutto sembra eterno. Come se ogni giorno fosse lo stesso giorno – che ricomincia ogni giorno – lo stesso giorno – che ricomincia ogni giorno – lo stesso giorno – che ricomincia.

«Se amiamo così tanto stare qui, è perché qui niente ci distrae dai nostri pensieri, niente distoglie le mie letture né i momenti che passo con mio fratello. In questo l'isola è un pò come il regno dei Titani. I Titani: queste figure leggendarie che vivevano senza desiderio, come semplici fruitori di movimenti arcaici, i loro riflessi, che sono le onde, i movimenti del sole e quello della terra.

«Vi presento Atlante, Oceano, Elio e questo è Boaz, mio fratello.»

## ANONYMOUS SOURCE

**WHO IS THE VOICE WE HEAR ON THE CASSETTE? NO ONE KNOWS. ASSUMING THAT THE TEXT IS AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL, WE CAN DEDUCE THAT HE IS A YOUNG MAN; MAN BECAUSE HE SPEAKS USING THE MASCULINE, AND YOUNG BECAUSE HIS VOICE HASN'T CHANGED. WHAT IS CERTAIN THOUGH IS THAT NO TRACE OF HIS TEXT, OF WHAT HE SAYS IN ITALIAN, HAS BEEN FOUND BY ANYONE ANYWHERE ELSE OTHER THAN ON THAT CASSETTE.**

### *Boaz è mio fratello*, the voice, on the cassette

The origin of the Boaz story was found on a cassette several years ago during Romain's vacation on the island of Procida in Italy, discovered by chance inside a cassette recorder that he bought in a small shop. From the cassette came the sound of an Italian voice, a boy speaking as though he were telling a secret. Romain understood only bits and pieces and some words were beyond him, but he immediately liked the tone, the intensity, and a certain graveness in the voice on the cassette, which he decided to keep.



The shop in Procida, photo by Amos

### in the exhibition

This voice can be heard in the exhibition as it is on the cassette. We also hear its words transposed into French, spoken by different characters and even some real people in their images.

## ROMAIN

**AFTER TWO YEARS OF A THEOLOGICAL DEGREE, ROMAIN STUDIED COMPOSITION AT THE GENEVA CONSERVATORY. HIS COLLABORATIONS WITH VISUAL ARTISTS LED HIM TO EXTEND HIS OWN PRACTICE TO INCLUDE VIDEO, PHOTOGRAPHY, SCULPTURE, AND MORE RECENTLY, WRITING. HE THEN JOINED THE [SÔMA ANDERS](#) COLLECTIVE WHICH HE SHARES WITH THE CHARACTERS IN HIS NOVELS. TOGETHER THEY CREATE VARIOUS PROJECTS, ONE OF WHICH IS BOAZ.**

### *Boaz, the novel*

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Upon his return to Paris, and with Andrea's help, Romain decided to dig deeper into the words on the cassette, which he translated only to find a mysterious text that could be interpreted in multiple ways. He found some clues: a name, a few places, and a few relationships that he laid out as the foundation of a novel, extrapolating on them in a puzzle that had more missing pieces than found ones.

Among the found pieces in the text is Boaz, a boy the community seems to adore. He loses both his parents as a child and is taken in by the local shopkeeper, who Boaz already knows and loves. The man has a daughter. This is who the young man refers to as a sister, the sister of the voice on the cassette, it seems. Romain names the three of them; Amos for the father, and Malachie and Deborah for the brother and sister.

Each one embodies a character. Boaz is the legend; his brother Malachie is the mystic. Deborah and Amos are the sacrificed. And the destinies of all four of them, according to who they are, unfolds little by little during the novel, until it reaches tragic end that they cannot avoid.

Each one also becomes a character acting independently. Acting independently. Because Boaz, Malachie, Deborah, and Amos are not objects. They do not belong to their author. Even if, having written them, the latter protects them, it is only to guarantee that they remain whole. But as for the rest, they act according to who they are and the author has no hold over them.

In the novel, they create. And these objects they created are exhibited today, along with the novel and the anonymous Italian voice from the cassette, their archeology.

### **in the exhibition**

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The novel is presented in two forms. 300 copies are available to be borrowed during the exhibition. There is also a limited numbered and marked edition printed on Rives Tradition paper, with unbound pages on display in the exhibition.

*You see, Mala? Nothing, I want nothing, I want to change nothing, I am nothing. The little that I am is thanks to you three. By you three. When I am with you, I sometimes feel a little like one of you. Just someone the same age who could be loved for who he is. But that doesn't last. Because as soon as I go out, all eyes are on me again. Eyes to which I have nothing to give. From which I take nothing. I am just a way out for them, do you understand? Malachie, do you understand what it is to only be a way out for others? To live out of duty? To be nothing but a bearer of burdens?*

Excerpt from the novel *Boaz*

*"Do you remember my parents?" because you, you have forgotten. [...] So Amos tells you about your parents. He usually calls them by their first names. You tell yourself that it's normal because they were friends, and you're moved by it. A customer comes in, an old man. He greets you, as he does every day. He hears Amos talking, he comes over to you and talks to you as well. The memories he unearths seem to bring him happiness as well as pain as soon as they are told. Another customer comes in, a third. They forget you are there and keep talking under your proud gaze about those who created you. They refer to them by their first names, as if listing off burdens. Amos listens, as you do, to the hum of the neighborhood. The shop is full of peaceful, community-minded people. And then one by one they leave, without any of them neglecting to touch you.*

Excerpt from the novel *Boaz*

*Like this day, the day after your birthday. The night before, there were five candles on the cake in the middle of the table. Six people around the cake for the last time. You have just blown out the candles. Malachie helped you. Your parents brought the packet, your gift. You are seated on your chair next to Amos', the packet in front of you. Malachie eats the rest of your cake. You open the packet. There is a drawing of a gray camera on the box. The camera is inside. You throw your arms around your parents.*

Excerpt from the novel *Boaz*



A photo taken by Amos of Malachie and Boaz in the park with Boaz's camera

## BOAZ

**WITHOUT BEING ABLE TO SAY WHY, THE COMMUNITY DESIGNATED BOAZ AS THE LEGEND FROM THE DAY OF HIS BIRTH. WE KNOW VERY LITTLE ABOUT HIS PARENTS – THE TYPICAL UNCERTAINTY THAT MAINTAINS A MYSTERY. WE KNOW THAT THEY KNEW AMOS, THE SHOPKEEPER WHO BECAME HIS FATHER, THAT THEY WERE FRIENDS EVEN, AND THAT THEY WERE MUCH RESPECTED BY THE COMMUNITY. HIS MOTHER WAS PARTICULARLY CHARISMATIC. AFTER THEIR DEATH WHEN BOAZ WAS BARELY SIX YEARS OLD, HE WAS TAKEN IN BY AMOS AND HIS CHILDREN, DEBORAH AND MALACHIE, BECOMING THEIR SON AND BROTHER. THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED ALTERNATED BETWEEN MONTHS AT SCHOOL IN PARIS AND VACATIONS SPENT WITH HIS NEW FAMILY ON THE LITTLE ISLAND OF PROCIDA IN ITALY, IN THE HOUSE AMOS HAD INHERITED FROM HIS OWN PARENTS. ON THE ISLAND AS IN PARIS, BOAZ AND MALACHIE BECAME INSEPARABLE AS THE YEARS PASSED. WHEN HE WAS EIGHTEEN AND HAD FINISHED HIS STUDIES, BOAZ WORKED IN THE SHOP WITH HIS FATHER UNTIL HE TURNED TWENTY, THE LAST YEAR OF HIS LIFE.**

### *Boaz*, the film

For his sixth birthday – the last he would spend with his parents, who died the next day, according to the novel – Boaz's parents give him a little camera which he takes with him everywhere. He films with it constantly, and it is from digging through these images that Romain reconstitutes an episode from his last year alive, when he is twenty years old and Malachie tries to convince his brother that together they could put his legendary character into words, a topic on which they were all usually silent. The film *Boaz* recreating this moment is as much Romain's work as theirs.

### in the exhibition

In the exhibition, the film is played silently; only the images and living spaces, smiles, and anger can be observed in passing. Use the following link to watch the film: <https://soma-anders.com/boaz-film/>

*You open up the camera screen and push the button on the side. As the screen comes to life, you look at Amos and Malachie in front of you [...] You press the red button and there is a small, high-pitched electronic sound. Hearing it, Malachie turns around. His handsome face looks at you. And at first, nothing. He is surely waiting for some response from you, for you to talk to him, for you to turn off the camera. You just keep filming him, that's all. The camera lens hums as you zoom in on his face and examine him. After a few seconds he gives you a reproachful look, furrowing his eyebrows. You do nothing. He makes a face at you. Then another. You do nothing. You're just thinking how handsome he is even when he is making faces.*

Excerpt from the novel *Boaz*

*I could write a text to read in front of the camera, we could go down to the beach with the sea in the background, it would be beautiful. I would talk about you, tell stories about you, about how you are at home, how you eat, how you sleep, how we secretly drink coffee at the cafés; I could talk about us too, how much we love each other, how you are my life, and you would trust me when I speak and you film it, because you'd know that I would never do anything to hurt you; you would trust me and that would make me so happy.*

Malachie in the film *Boaz*



A still shot of Malachie writing his text taken from one of the rushes

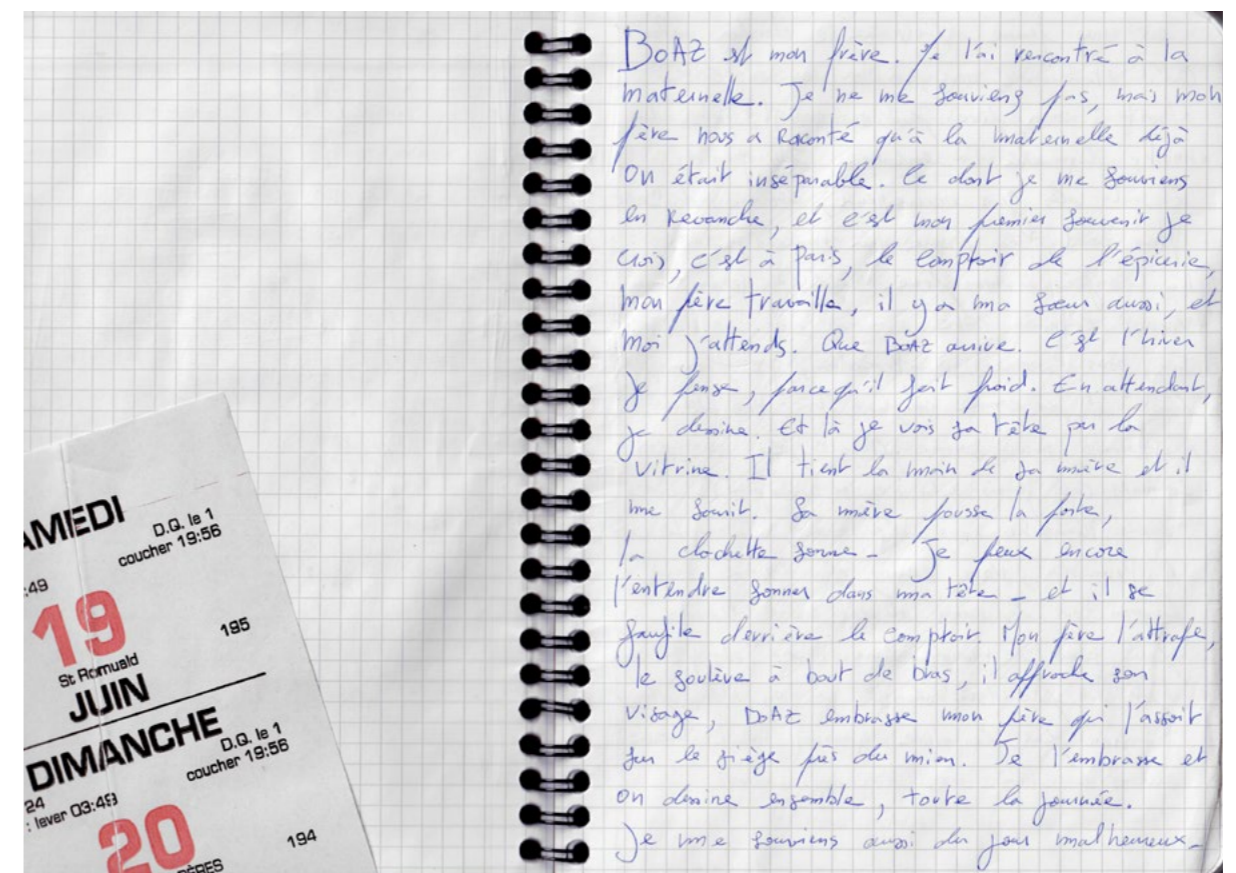
## BOAZ

### *Boaz, the rushes*

In the exhibition, alongside to the projected film *Boaz*, we find other images of the young man displayed unaltered on monitors or projected on screens: a taxi ride showing the streets of Procida; Malachie drawing on the patio of their vacation home or making little dolls out of straw in Paris. We also find the two brothers' film, *Boaz is my brother*.

### *Boaz is my brother*

In the film *Boaz* when Malachie tries to convince his brother that they should tell of his legendary nature, what he is really suggesting is that together on Procida, the island where they spend all their summers, Boaz should film him saying a text that he would have previously written. This is the text that we find on the cassette, and so the anonymous source turns out to be an object manufactured by one of the resulting characters, creating an infinite loop.



Facsimile of a page from Malachie's notebook

*One needs to have known him to understand that his life was ruled by a collection of rites to which he could make no exceptions. That he was sometimes overcome with profound distress when life came into opposition with these rites, and one cannot control life. And that his vacations on the island every summer represented the highest rite of all.*

Deborah in *The interrogations*



Map of crosses drawn by Malachie

*On the walls of each street on the island where Boaz had walked, you could find a cross drawn by the inhabitants as a way of saying that the legend had been there.*

Deborah in *The interrogations*

*On Procida, you will see crosses on almost every wall, and these crosses mean that everyone loves Boaz, and I have promised to say nothing more except that no one will ever love him as much as I do.*

Malachie in *Boaz is my brother*

*Two or three times that summer, you get up before the others and walk towards the cluster of shops. A new cross, x-shaped, on another stone wall. Soon the x-shapes punctuate all the walls on the island, as with time you pass through each plot of land.*

Excerpt from the novel *Boaz*

## MALACHIE

**MALACHIE IS AMOS' SON AND THE BROTHER OF DEBORAH AND BOAZ. FROM A YOUNG AGE, HE MANIFESTS A UNIQUE DRIVE FOR EVERYTHING MYSTICAL, WHICH INCREASES AS HE GETS OLDER. IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT HE VOWS HIS UNCONDITIONAL LOVE TO BOAZ, THE LEGEND. HE ALSO LOVES TO COLLECT ANY SIGNS OF DEVOTION TOWARDS HIS BROTHER.**

**HIS CHILDHOOD AND THE REST OF HIS LIFE ARE GOVERNED BY REGULAR CYCLES, HIS RITUALS, WHICH PUNCTUATE THE DAYS, MONTHS, AND YEARS: HIS WALKS WITH BOAZ, BIRTHDAY PARTIES, SUMMERS ON THE ITALIAN ISLAND OF PROCIDA. WHEN HE IS EIGHTEEN, HE GOES OFF TO UNIVERSITY WITHOUT HIS BROTHER FOR THE FIRST TIME AND STUDIES RELIGIOUS HISTORY. UPON READING MIRCEA ELIADE, HE BECOMES PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN PRE-MONOTHEISTIC CULTS, AS WELL AS THE MORE RECENT CARGO CULT.**

### *The photographs of the crosses on the walls*

The inhabitants of Procida, the island on which Amos and his children always spend their summer vacations, have a ritual: on each of the walls along the paths where Boaz has walked, they testify of his passing by drawing a cross, in chalk, paint, or scratched on the wall with a rock. The summer he turns twenty, Malachie gets the idea to photograph and record a series of these crosses. About a hundred of these photographs are received from Deborah and then inventoried, as well as a map of the island drawn by the young man, recording the position of each photo he took.

### **in the exhibition**

Thirty of the photographs of crosses are displayed in the exhibition.



Malachie dessine la carte des croix sur la terrasse de la maison de Procida



*You don't see them, but the vacationers watch you. A few children deposit some shells gathered on the beach near you. Deborah smiles at them gently, making sure they aren't bothering you. [...] You straighten up. You take off your sunglasses. You see, ten, twenty little piles of shells all around you. Footprints forming the shape of a star of which you are the center. You look around you at the vast beach, the endless sea, and the children with their parents at a reasonable distance from the three of you; more than reasonable, really, as if they were offering you space that they had given up for themselves. You get up.*

*You're lying on your back, your body exposed to the sun. Amos is under the umbrella with his two children. You're so happy he came with you today, like he used to when you were all younger. His presence is eternally reassuring to you. [...] He watches you get up to go take a swim, going down towards the distant water, a train of vacationers following. He sees you floating on your back, face upturned to the sky. Under the happy gazes of their parents, the children all float on their back, forming a star around you.*

Excerpts from the novel *Boaz*

*Before he was overtaken by his film project, Malachie was fascinated by the Cargo cult. He talked about it all the time. One of his professors had mentioned it in a class. The cult developed with the arrival of foreign soldiers in Melanesia, I believe. When outsiders arrived, the Melanesian tribes discovered science that was previously unknown to them; operators speaking into radios, for example; and they also discovered the results of this science, the cargo ships bringing provisions to the island. In their eyes, it was an act of God. He was the one receiving the radio messages and responding by sending the cargo ships. So the Melanesians wanted to imitate the newcomers. They made effigies of radios out of straw and prayed into them. Malachie was fascinated by the Melanesians. Perhaps it is them that he tried to incarnate with his dolls.*

Deborah in *The interrogations*



Photograph by Amos of Malachie drawing a star

## MALACHIE

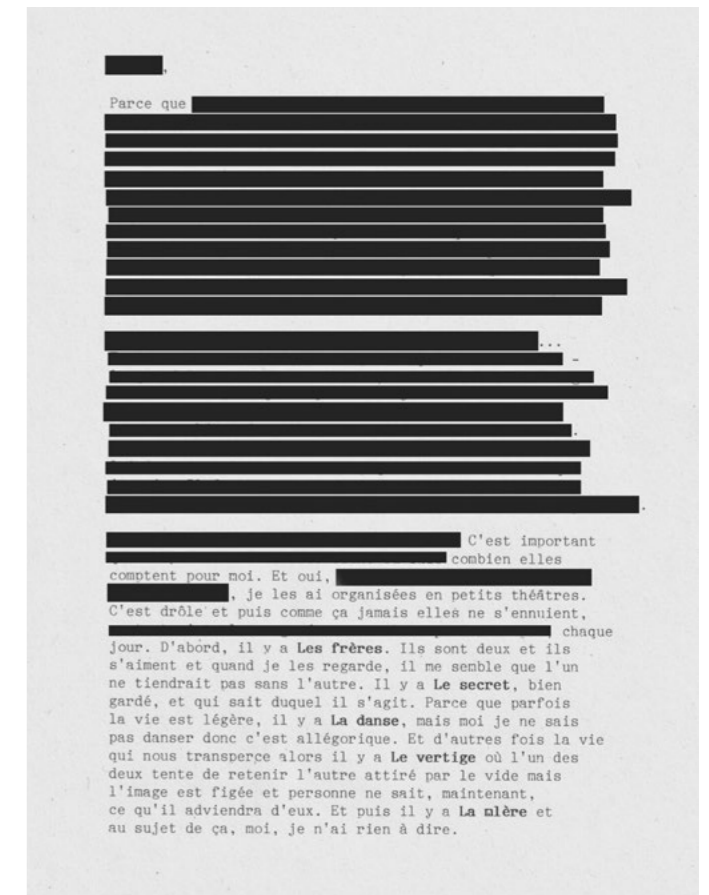
### *Malachie's stars*

### *Malachie's dolls*

Malachie organized his dolls into groups, or little theatres as he called them in a letter he wrote to Romain.

### in the exhibition

Nineteen of Malachie's dolls are on display.



Malachie's letter first page



*You are happy to spend some time alone with Amos. You love his presence, his advice, the feeling you get in your throat when, his hand on yours, he shows you how to paint the wood, following the direction of the grain, be careful now, don't scratch it. That feeling, without contact even, comes from heaven, you say to yourself. Amos is also happy to have his boy with him again. You are that boy and you come from far away. Boaz, we're going to have to talk about it, we can't get around it...*

Excerpt from the novel *Boaz*

*You arrive at the cluster of shops and see Amos there, reading the newspaper at a table on the terrace of a café. You didn't know he came there in the mornings while you slept. You realize that you don't know everything about him. It seems obvious to you now that he would have his secrets. You hesitate for a moment. Should you disturb him? Should you just leave him alone and go back home without buying bread? You don't have time to think before he lowers the newspaper and sees you. He shoots you a wide smile and waves you over. You're so happy to be invited to his table, this table you didn't know was his. He pulls out a chair next to him and you sit down. Ah, you forgot to kiss his cheeks. You stretch your face towards his, awkwardly, and bump noses because for the first time, you are unaccustomed and also moved at sharing his secret café with him.*

*[...] This morning, you admire him as a man, not as a father. Sure, upright, respected. You are proud of him. The waiter finally comes to ask what you want. Amos orders you a coffee, your secret; you understand, you smile at him. The order is taken and the waiter must now take his hand off your shoulder; he runs it through your hair and goes to make the coffee.*

Excerpt from the novel *Boaz*

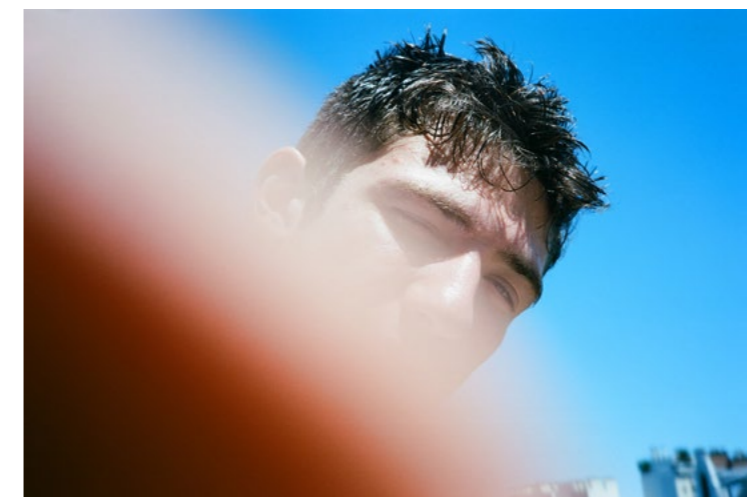
*Your parents were strange people, you know. One day you were with me at the shop. You must have been four at the time. You were drawing a tree. The doorbell rang. We saw your mother come in through the glass door. She came up to you. She put out her hand over the counter to caress your cheek. She asked if you were doing alright. You made a little noise as if to say "yes, Mom, I'm ok" and went back to your drawing. And then she and I started to talk. [...] Then a customer arrived. She picked out a few items and made her way to the register. Your mother stepped back to make room for her. The woman looked at you. She said something like, "So, how is little Boaz?" And then she looked at me and added, "It's incredible how big your son is getting." I didn't know what to reply. In fact, I didn't reply. I didn't even smile. I just took the coins she handed to me. The customer left. And then I saw your mother's face. She was smiling at me. I was all confused – ashamed – and she smiled at me. Without sadness. It was probably the most incomprehensible thing I have ever experienced; the lack of sadness or reproach. Just a smile full of goodness that I rediscover sometimes when I look at you. That day I felt that your mother had entrusted me to you... Entrusted you to me, I mean... But I shouldn't really say that, do you understand?*

Amos, in a document from the archives

## AMOS

**AMOS IS A SHOPKEEPER. HE HAS TWO CHILDREN, DEBORAH AND MALACHIE, AND WE KNOW NOTHING OF THEIR MOTHER. EVERY EVENING WHEN HE GOES TO PICK THEM UP FROM PRESCHOOL, HE ALSO BRINGS HOME ANOTHER CHILD THEIR AGE WHO STAYS AT THE SHOP UNTIL HIS MOTHER ARRIVES. THIS IS BOAZ. BETWEEN THE SHOPKEEPER AND THE CHILD THERE IS AN IMMEDIATE, INTENSE CONNECTION AND A MUTUAL AFFECTION. AFTER THE DEATH OF BOAZ'S PARENTS, IT IS OBVIOUSLY AMOS WHO TAKES HIM IN. HE SUPPORTS THE LEGEND ALL THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE, SOMETIMES MORE THAN HE DOES HIS OWN TWO CHILDREN.**

### *Amos' family photographs*



### **in the exhibition**

Photographs of Amos' family are shown in a slideshow projected on the wall, and can also be seen in a photo album in a display case.

*Breathless, she asks herself how it is possible. How she could efface herself all this time. How she could take care of you without ever having existed. How you didn't think about her, ever, not even a little earlier when she left for the beach. How your love was greater than anything, without her. How she protected that love. How she sacrificed herself. Then she looks at the man in front of the house blocking her from entering. He gives her a look to say it's not her fault – "How could it be my fault?" she hesitates – and that everything will be ok, that everyone knew. "Knew what?" she asks. "That Boaz is the legend," he answers, surprised, and adds to himself, "but the legend cannot live." Deborah remains frozen, removed from the movement around her.*

Excerpt from the novel *Boaz*



Deborah's slide

## DEBORAH

**DEBORAH IS AMOS' DAUGHTER, THE SISTER OF MALACHIE AND BOAZ. AS A CHILD, SHE IS CLOSE TO HER BROTHER, BUT THE ARRIVAL OF BOAZ SLOWLY DRIVES THEM APART. SHE IS KIND AND MATERNAL WITH HER BROTHERS. FURTHERMORE, IT IS HER WHO ACCOMPANIES THEM DURING THEIR LAST STAY ON THE ITALIAN ISLAND, THE SUMMER OF THEIR DEATH, AFTER WHICH SHE IS UNCEASINGLY QUESTIONED ON THE SUBJECT OF THEIR LAST MOMENTS AND OF THE ROLE THAT SHE MIGHT HAVE PLAYED IN THEM.**

*Deborah's drawings and photo album*



### in the exhibition

Deborah's drawings appear on the pages of a photo album she put together with photos taken by Amos. They can also be seen within the photos themselves as these are projected in the slideshow.

*As was his custom, Malachie was talking and you were listening. And suddenly you weren't listening anymore. At first he didn't notice, too preoccupied telling you why the myths, why the rites. Now he sees the seriousness on your face, an unaccustomed seriousness. Irregular breathing. He says your name, once, twice, and begins to get worried. He takes your hand, "Boaz," and you don't move. No, you're looking at the bench in front of you, at the woman who just sat down there, the woman who, as a child, the day your parents died, the day you were torn from Amos, the day you lost everything, gave you the pendant you still wear around your neck. You turn to your brother, your voice shaking, your gaze far away. "Sorry, Mala, I'll be back." Malachie doesn't understand. His face is astonished. You get up and leave him alone on the bench. You sit down next to the woman. Plunging your hand beneath the collar of your nice gray sweater, you pull out the pendant and gently show it to her, to let her know who you are. She knows, Boaz. Everyone knows who you are. She touches the pendant, runs her hand up the metal chain to your throat and strokes the back of your neck like one coming back home. You give in to her gesture. You tell her your parents died the day you saw her. With her palm resting on the nape of your neck, she gives you a sovereign, timeless look, then enfolds you in her arms where you cry. The center of Malachie cries. The center of Malachie, shaken, cries under his gaze. You dry your tears. The two of you stay for a moment without moving and then say goodbye tenderly.*

Excerpt from the novel *Boaz*

*That day, the day after your birthday, it is raining on the other side of the shop window. You're at the counter between Malachie and Amos, camera in hand, when a customer comes in. She goes to the refrigerator to get a carton of milk, comes up to the counter and stretches out some coins to Amos. To you she holds out a pendant, a little drop of lead mounted on a thin ring through which a light metal chain runs. You look at Amos, who smiles gently at you. You look at the customer, a stranger to you, and delicately stretch out your hand towards her, palm up. She lays the drop in the palm of your hand, coils the chain around the pendant, strokes your skin like one coming back home, flashes a smile, says goodbye and disappears. How many moments like that, with people who have nothing in particular to say to you, but just want the contact. But the memory of that exact day and that exact woman who seems to come from far away remain indelible to you.*

Excerpt from the novel *Boaz*

## THE WOMAN WITH THE PENDANT

**WHO IS THE WOMAN WITH THE PENDANT? NOBODY KNOWS. NOT EVEN BOAZ OR AMOS. WE ONLY KNOW THAT SHE APPEARED IN THE BOY'S LIFE THE DAY HIS PARENTS LEFT IT, OFFERING HIM THE HUMBLE ORNAMENT, THE LITTLE LEAD DROP ON A SLIM METAL CHAIN. THAT SHE RETURNS HOME WHEN SHE TOUCHES HIM; ARE THEY RELATED? AND SHE SEES HIM AGAIN AS AN ADULT IN THE PARK - A MOMENT THAT SEEMS TO UNLEASH SOMETHING IN HIM.**

### *Boaz's pendant*



Amos' photograph (detail)

### **in the exhibition**

Boaz's lead and silver pendant is exhibited in the monolith.

*Boaz's name stirred up the most intense reactions. Already when he was a child, more so as a young adult, and to an unimaginable extent after his death. It is through his death that the fullness of his figure, of his burden, I don't know what you want to call it, was revealed. But you should know that out of all of us, my brother is the one who loved him the most. The most radically. Do you know the origin of this word? Radical, from radicalis, meaning roots. I can say that Malachie and Boaz developed out of a common root. Like two sides of the same coin, the mystic side and the legend. But the legend cannot live and the mystic knows it. And they carried each other away.*

*When they died, I called my father and as soon as he picked up the phone and heard my voice, he knew. He knew it would happen. Why then did he let me go with them that summer, knowing what was in store? He came to the island for his sons' vigil. It was the morning of the day after the night they died. I waited for him at the harbor and he got off the boat with a closed face. The carabinieri who accompanied him drove us up to the house. And all the way there, I remember there was a crowd and a profound silence, and my father cleared a path for himself and went in. I stayed on the front step. When he emerged, the light had gone out of him.*

*For twenty years now I've watched my father go to work every day, as though performing a ritual that would protect him from what happened. Until last week when he died. He wasn't even that old... For twenty years, I haven't set foot on the island; he wouldn't have been able to bear it. He would have seen it as sacrilege. So I stayed beside him all this time. But now I am free, and for the first time, I act only for myself. So now I will go there, to finally see the place where my two loves died.*

*You should have seen them teasing, flopped on the same bed, Malachie talking incessantly to Boaz of his readings, of his thoughts, shooting their film, as he called it, washing together, drinking from the same glass to show that their union was so much more precious than everything else it forgave.*

*Sometimes I wonder what would have happened if we had stayed with my father that summer, if Malachie and Boaz hadn't insisted on going without him. Or if he had been able to free himself up to go with us in the end. Would they have stayed alive then? Or was it their destiny to die?*

Deborah from *The interrogations*

## POSTHUMOUS

**AFTER BOAZ AND MALACHIE'S DISAPPEARANCE, THE COMMUNITY IS STUNNED AT FIRST, AND THEN LITTLE BY LITTLE, WANTING TO PRESERVE THE MEMORY OF THE LEGEND, ORGANIZES ITSELF AND COLLECTS THE OBJECTS THAT HAD BELONGED TO THE LEGEND, WHICH IT RECORDS, OR PRODUCING OTHERS UPON WHICH TO PROJECT THE REFLECTION OF THE BOY'S STORY.**

Who is the interrogator? Like the woman with the pendant, it is a man of whom we know nothing and have only intuitions. The way he questions Deborah, the solemnity in his voice lead one to believe that he has authority within the group that administrates Boaz's memory – a group which seems all-powerful in and of itself. We can suppose that he was already present from the night the two boys died and that he was there the next day when Amos arrived for his two children's vigil.

### *The interrogations*

In the exhibition, at regular intervals we can hear Deborah being questioned inside what seems to be a church.

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*I know Romain well. Sometimes I even feel like I hear his voice when I write, and I have to shake myself back to who I am. But I've only read a few snippets of his book, which is now advertised by the community with large posters on the streets.*

Excerpt from Deborah's correspondence  
with Emmanuelle Lequeux

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*The objects, those of Boaz and Malachie and my father, and even some of my own, were not taken from me. I was asked for them and I gave them up, although I wouldn't have been able to refuse anything that was asked of me as long as I was accused, as long as I felt guilty.*

Excerpt from Deborah's correspondence  
with Anne-Laure Chamboissier

## POSTHUMOUS/1

### *The posters*

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Excerpts from the different available sources (the novel and recorded correspondence) are arranged in a layout for public display.

42 cyanotype posters are shown in the exhibition. Colored paper was used to provide multiple contrasting variations.

### *The doll landscape*

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The origins and meaning of the dolls may not even be clear to their creator, Malachie. Does he see them as an echo of the Cargo cult, wherein magic overshadows real phenomena? Are they meant to be little theatrical scenes in which he appears alongside his brother? Beyond doubt, however, is the sacred nature these little objects acquire posthumously. A shelf is built to display them in a landscape organized into small groups, or little theatres as Malachie calls them.

### *Doll portraits*

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Given their apparent fragility and fearing that they might not hold up over time, the decision was made to photograph each doll. And it became apparent that photographing them makes them easy to show and to reproduce; it becomes possible to play with their size, revealing them, blowing them up, focusing on details, bestowing them with a certain feeling of humanity or solemnity.

Five 2.1-meter-high portraits have been hung within the exhibition.

### *Photographs of Malachie's stars*

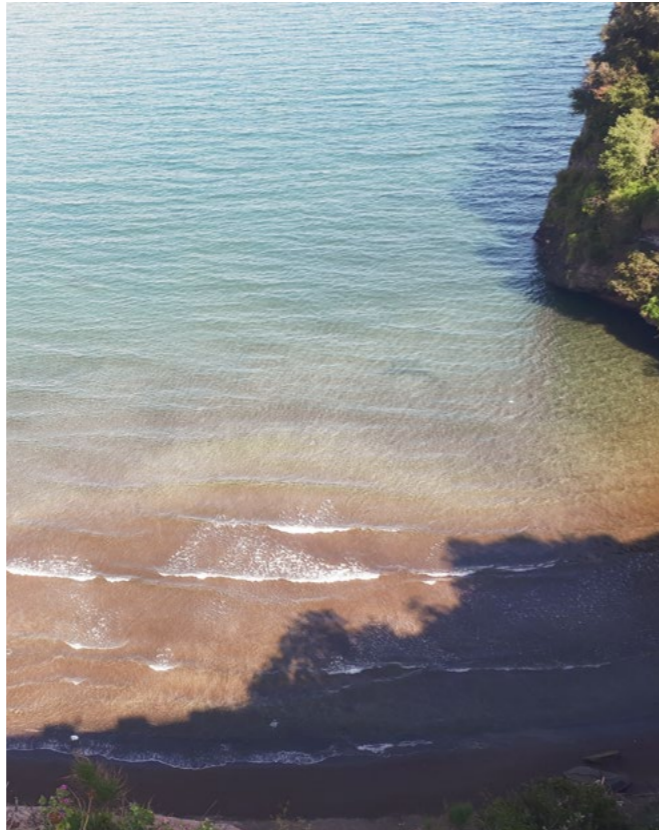
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For the same reasons, the drawings of Malachie's "stars" are blown up, but this time using cyanotype to allow the sea, left white in the original drawings, to become blue in the new medium.

Two 60 x 90 cm cyanotype prints are displayed in the exhibition.



drawing by the kids from the École Kleber, Mulhouse (detail)



*Boaz est mon frère* : poster used by Boaz & Malachie in their film

---

*And today when I see the sculptures in homage, when I see the exhibition of the relics taken from me by the very ones who interrogate me, I regret that everyone does not respect the silence about them, a silence he would share with others, the silence nearest to Boaz.*

Excerpt from Deborah's correspondence with Anne-Laure Chamboissier

## POSTHUMOUS/2

### *Imitations of Boaz is my brother*

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After the disappearance of Boaz and Malachie, schools or families began to celebrate them through imitations of their acts, especially the shooting of their film *Boaz is my brother*: Malachie stands with a poster of the sea behind him while Boaz films him.

The exhibition features two videos projected on a screen, one filmed by a class at the École Élémentaire Kléber in Mulhouse, and the second by a family.

### *The clock*

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To celebrate Boaz hour by hour, a clock has been designed to combine music with text excerpts concerning the legend, spoken in French by the author (during a public reading) or in Italian by the voice of the boy on the cassette. However, the latter never actually spoke these words; his voice was reconstructed and synthesized by the community, who considers it to be a foundational element.

The sounds of the clock, located just next to the monolith, can be heard on various speakers within the exhibition.

### *The monolith*

---

Boaz's pendant is perhaps the most mysterious and precious item he left behind and multiple hypotheses are in circulation concerning the woman who gave this object to the legend and the significance of her gesture. This importance explains the decision to display the pendant protected within the hollow of a horizontally carved-out totem supported by three pieces of granite, rendering it inaccessible and nearly invisible to those who come to see it.

The monolith protecting the pendant is placed in the center of the exhibition hall.

**À L'INTENTION DU CONSEIL  
RAPPORT D'ENQUÊTE — XIX/265**

**SUJET : « Deborah »**

**OBJET : « disparition de La légende »**

Transcription de l'entretien de ce jour en annexe

Pour rappel : le Sujet est fille d'Amos (également impliqué), sœur de Malachie, sœur adoptive de BOAZ. Au moment des faits, elle est absente de la maison, MAIS bien présente sur l'île.

À noter : père resté à Paris (motifs réels vagues). À notre connaissance, le Sujet est la dernière à avoir vu La légende. Témoignage jugé crucial.

—  
—  
Le Sujet est sain de corps et d'esprit. L'équilibre et la patience sont les axes de sa personnalité, ils engendrent le dévouement. Son intelligence est vive et sa mémoire pointilleuse. Malgré le temps, elle se trouve encore déstabilisée par certains des aspects abordés, en particulier par l'évocation A. de sa responsabilité dans l'Objet des entretiens (la disparition de La légende) ; B. de sa conscience quant à la portée des événements de Procida. Il en résulte dans son attitude des mécanismes de défense qui, en définitive, nous apparaissent comme des marqueurs A. de son rôle dans l'avènement de ce qu'elle qualifie elle-même de "Plus Haut Rituel" (1) et que nous nommons **Métamorphose**, et B. de la conscience diffuse qu'elle en a. Diffuse mais effective. Son témoignage est fiable.

—  
—  
Nous soutenons à la suite de l'entretien : A. que le Sujet tient un rôle précis dans la **Métamorphose** ; B. que les causes profondes des événements de Procida modèlent son inconscient et la maintiennent en connexion constante avec B.1. les acteurs de l'Objet (La légende et son frère) et B.2. la force reliant les reliques qui nous sont parvenues.

—  
—  
— PAGE SUIVANTE

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(1) cf III/102, § 2 : « était d'entre tous le rite le plus haut ».

## POSTHUMOUS/3

FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF THE BOARD  
INVESTIGATION REPORT — XIX/265

SUBJECT: "Deborah"

OBJECT: "Disappearance of The Legend"

The transcript of today's interview is attached

Reminder: The Subject is the daughter of Amos (also implicated), sister of Malachie, adopted sister of BOAZ. At the time of the Events, she was absent from the house, BUT was indeed present on the Island.

Note: Father remained in Paris (real motives unclear). To our knowledge, the Subject is the last one to have seen The Legend. Testimony considered crucial.

—  
The Subject is sound of mind and body. Balance and patience are the axes of her personality, engendering dedication. She is possessed of a keen intelligence and a sharp memory. Even after all this time, she is still destabilized by certain topics, in particular allusions to A. her responsibility regarding the Object of the interviews (the disappearance of The Legend); and B. her awareness of the significance of the Events on Procida. This results in her displaying defense mechanisms that, in the end, appear to us as markers of A. her role leading up to what she herself qualifies as the "Highest Rite" (1) and that we call Metamorphosis, and B. the dispersed consciousness that she has of it. Dispersed but accurate. Her testimony is reliable.

—  
As a result of the interview, we put forth the following conclusions: A. that the Subject plays a specific role in the Metamorphosis; B. that the root causes of the Events on Procida shape her unconscious and keep her in constant connection with B.1. the actors of the Object (The Legend and his brother) and B.2. the force linking the relics that have been left to us.

—  
The Subject has accepted her role in the Events on Procida (although she sometimes denies it, and despite a compliant tendency towards melancholy) and this could be an effect of the spiritual influence of The Legend, of its tangible spirituality. The Subject presents the facts to us as inevitable, beyond her reach. We do not doubt her sincerity, nor do we deny the inevitable character of the founding phenomena associated with The Legend — much the contrary. However, according to her own words, everything happens as if she had scrupulously ensured that the Metamorphosis — which paradoxically she knew about, and the interviews even prove that she followed all the stages of conception — took place under the best possible circumstances (2). Although kept at a distance and suffering from this distance, she cannot turn away from the igneous, essential love with which her brothers burn.

—  
We put forth that that which has been considered a secular event is indeed a regular, cosmic event, which, along with all its other occurrences throughout History, takes the crystalized form of a cycle.

—  
In this regularity of occurrences which form the cycle, we persist in attaching a particular significance to the one that interests us today, the Object of this report: the disappearance of The Legend. The hint of eschatology and of revival which we discern seems well founded, according to which the legend will cleanse the hearts with his liquid fire, that it will call down the sacred fire.

— END

(1) cf III/102, § 2: "was the highest rite of all."

(2) the role played by "the woman with the pendant" — whose identity remains unknown — is to this day unclear and could prove to be just as decisive.



**« TU VOIS MALA ?**

**RIEN, JE NE VEUX RIEN  
JE N'AIMERAIS RIEN CHANGER  
JE NE SUIS RIEN.**

**LE PEU QUE JE SUIS  
C'EST GRÂCE À VOUS  
À TRAVERS VOUS.**

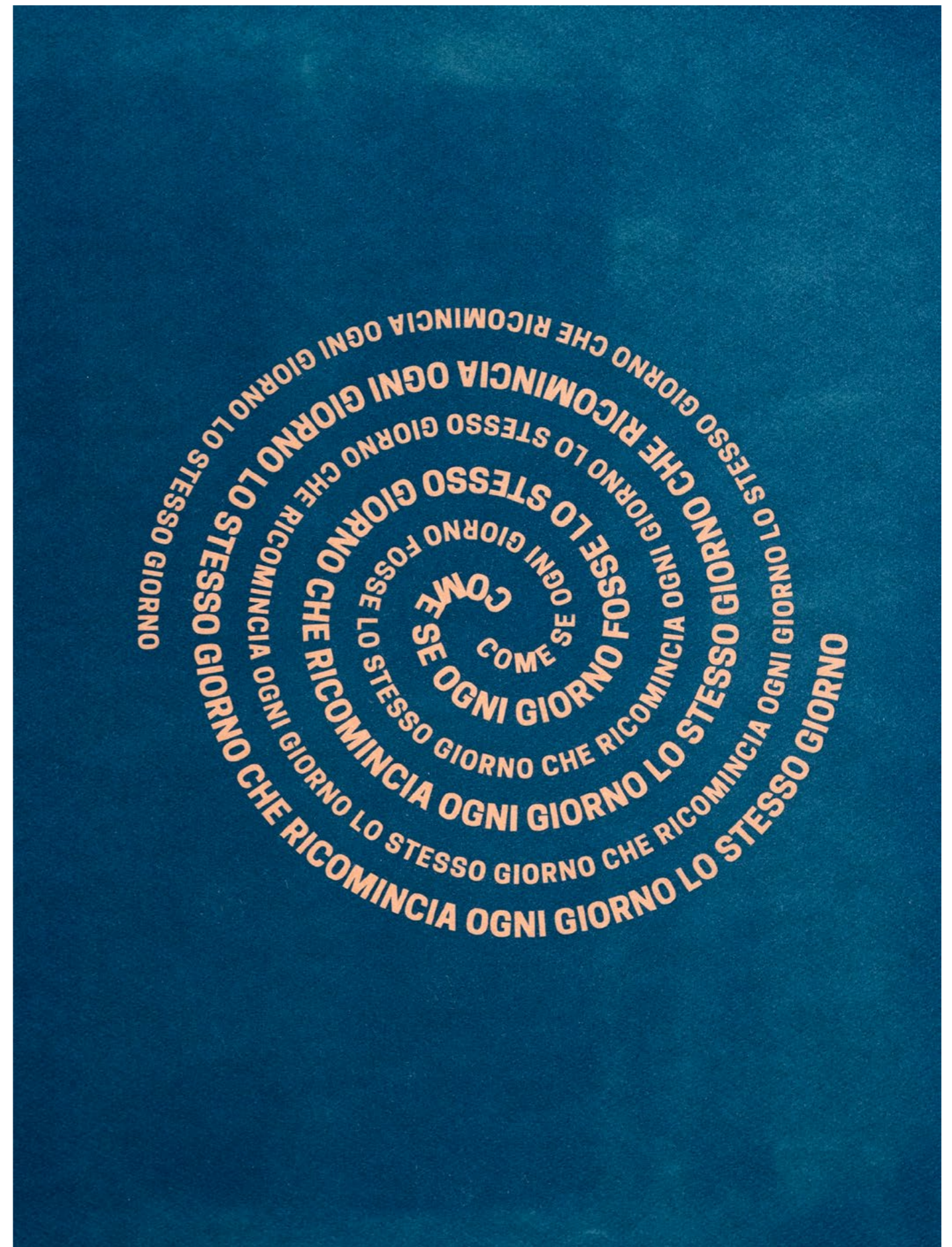
**MAIS ÇA NE DURE PAS. PARCE QUE  
JE SORS ET TOUS LES REGARDS  
SE TOURNENT DE NOUVEAU VERS MOI.**

**DES REGARDS AUXQUELS  
JE NE DONNE RIEN.  
AUXQUELS JE NE PRENDS RIEN.**

**JE SUIS JUSTE UNE LIGNE DE FUITE POUR EUX  
TU COMPRENDS ?**

**MALACHIE, TU COMPRENDS CE QUE C'EST  
DE N'ÊTRE QU'UNE LIGNE DE FUITE  
POUR LES AUTRES ?**

**DE VIVRE PAR DEVOIR ?  
DE N'ÊTRE QUE LE PORTEUR D'UNE CHARGE ? »**



SOMA-ANDERS.COM || BOAZ@SOMA-ANDERS.COM || MALA@SOMA-ANDERS.COM || AMOS@SOMA-ANDERS.COM || ROMAIN@SOMA-ANDERS.COM || DEBORAH@SOMA-ANDERS.COM

WOULD YOU LIKE TO GET IN TOUCH WITH BOAZ,  
MALACHIE, DEBORAH, AMOS, ROMAIN ? HERE ARE  
THEIR EMAIL ADDRESSES. THEY'LL READ YOUR  
MESSAGES AND MIGHT EVEN FIND THE TIME TO WRITE  
YOU BACK (BUT THEY SOMETIMES ARE SO BUSY...)

# CORRESPONDENCE

**BETWEEN THE CHARACTERS**

**&**

**ANNE-LAURE CHAMBOISSIER**

**SANDRINE WYMANN**

**AMI BARAK**

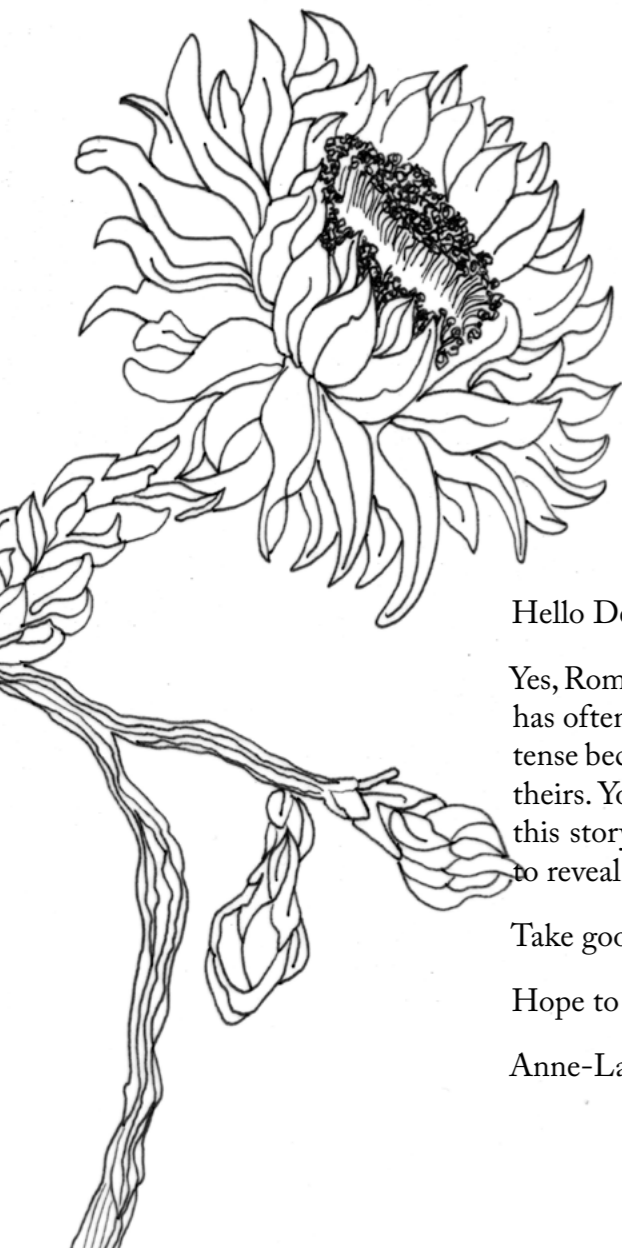
**EMMANUELLE LEQUEUX**

**ANNE-LAURE CHAMBOISSIER**  
ART CRITIC AND CURATOR

Hello Deborah,

Excluded from the relationship that linked your brothers – the intensity of this relationship – you seem, after all this time, to bear a certain regret at having effaced yourself. Aren't you, in fact, the principal observer and the best witness?

Anne-Laure



Hello Deborah,

Yes, Romain gave me your address. I know that you're important to him, and he has often spoken to me of your love for Malachie and Boaz. I use the present tense because our loved ones continue to inhabit our lives long after they leave theirs. You said you weren't accustomed to speaking, but as the last witness of this story and having listened so much to them, don't you have some things to reveal to us?

Take good care of yourself,

Hope to hear from you soon,

Anne-Laure

**DEBORAH**

Hello Anne-Laure,

Excuse me for replying to you so late. I haven't been checking my messages very often these days.

My words in answer to your question may seem a bit confused, since I am not accustomed to talking. More to listening. And I listened to my brother a lot. Mostly to him, in fact. Boaz didn't talk much either.

So, yes, perhaps I effaced myself from their relationship, as one retracts one's hand from a flame. But perhaps I decided to do it, perhaps I had this instinct. To leave them my place. Because everything they shared would have been too intense for me? Because I wanted to protect that intensity between them from an outside presence? I don't know.

Maybe Malachie also wouldn't have left any space for me.

Maybe in the end the space that we possess is always the fruit of a transaction, so perhaps I lost, in their eyes.

But I never felt like an observer. Because I actively loved both of them, and my father. I protected them. Because watching them was already doing. And I would love to watch them now.

Now that my father is gone, I am the last witness, along with Romain.

On that note, is he the one who gave you my address?

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Deborah

Hello Deborah,

I respect your point of view and it's true that we are indeed just outside spectators of what you experienced, trying to understand bits and pieces of the bond between you. Their silences that you seem to cherish and respect, perhaps to protect their memory, are they not too heavy for you to bear?

When you speak of the relics that were taken from you, do you mean they were stolen? Were they taken without your consent? I was wondering about this.

I look forward to hearing back from you, unless it is too painful for you to answer my questions.

Anne-Laure

Hello Anne-Laure,

When all four of us were at home, my father used to protect the silence among us. As did Boaz, for that matter. As though for them everything had to be settled without words. As if speaking ran the risk of damaging the thing spoken, by freezing it in place. So in these silences, apart from daily topics and in spite of Malachie who sometimes tried — unsuccessfully — to get us to talk about deep things, everything was only intuition. The intuition, indeed, that Malachie would burn. That Boaz would disappear. But burn how? And disappear to where? That we did not know. I never knew it.

After their passing, after Boaz's passing, I was interrogated. Interrogated is the word for it... I was asked to say what they never told me, to have seen what they never showed me. And at first, faced with my scant responses, I felt like they looked at me as one guilty. Guilty of not knowing. I also believed that I was a victim. Of the situation. Of my brothers. Of my father. Of Boaz. But now, I understand that I am neither one nor the other. I am just their sister and daughter, just myself, caught in the midst of their silences which I in turn protect, to not freeze them, to not forget.

And today when I see the sculptures in homage, when I see the exhibition of the relics taken from me by the very ones who interrogate me, I regret that everyone does not respect the silence about them, a silence he would share with others, the silence nearest to Boaz. I regret that when they speak, everything becomes frozen. But what other way is there? How can the silence of Boaz be passed on to those who come? How can the void not be filled? That I do not know. Only Boaz knew. Only his presence could achieve it.

Talk to you soon,

Deborah

Hello Anne-Laure,

The objects, those of Boaz and Malachie and my father, and even some of my own, were not taken from me. I was asked for them and I gave them up, although I wouldn't have been able to refuse anything that was asked of me as long as I was accused, as long as I felt guilty. But I confess that looking back, I can't understand the interest people took in these items. They were mostly just ordinary objects. I spent my childhood looking at them. Except perhaps Boaz's pendant. That was certainly not an ordinary object.

At the moment of their passing, I didn't understand why the legend, which when I was a child seemed more like a game than anything else, became so serious and strict. Maybe it is Boaz's gesture which made it thus. Maybe the legend doesn't work unless it is alive, unless it is skirting around simple answers and proof, remaining unfulfilled and merely in power. Perhaps the passing of the legend caused it to become fixed, recorded, frozen; and when we fear losing something, we lose it all the more quickly.

After all this time, I think I finally understand Boaz's silence, which today I find light. The pleasure of saying nothing and keeping quiet. The potential for bonding and fluidity, the liquid nature of his silences.

Thank you for these conversations, Anne-Laure, and I wish you all the best in the future,

Deborah



**SANDRINE WYMAN**  
**DIRECTOR OF LA KUNSTHALLE MULHOUSE**

Dear Amos,

I encountered you during my first reading of Romain Kronenberg's book, and since we are going to share an exhibition and I'll have more time to spend with you, it's important to me to get to know you better.

I reread your story this afternoon, all in one go, seated at my desk. I took some notes on you, Boaz, Malachie, and Deborah. I tried to write a little portrait of each one of you. I jotted only a few things down next to your name; the words "secrets," "empty," "it makes you think that..." Nothing that really properly describes you. But you were decisive in so many things in Boaz's life. Without you, there wouldn't have been a second family; without you, he wouldn't have grown up so close to Malachie; without you, he would never have gone to Procida...

Amos, when was it that you decided to make Boaz a part of your family?

Sandrine Wymann



Dear Ms. Wymann,

Sandrine,

I didn't decide. Never decided. Anything.

The first time I saw Boaz, he had only just been born.

I already knew his mother then. Everyone knew her. Her strictness, her presence.

His mother had been coming to buy things at the shop every day for a long time. And I saw her pregnant with Boaz. I knew that was his name, I heard his name from the lips of his mother before he was even born. That peculiar way she had of saying it, in her accent, with a voice both peaceful and strong at the same time.

The first time I saw Boaz, I wasn't taken with him but rather with her. Her way of introducing me to him. As though she had already entrusted him to me. And she laid him in my arms.

There are certain things about Boaz's mother that Romain doesn't reveal in his book. He doesn't say that Boaz was like her.

No, I decided nothing. One day at the shop, Boaz was busy drawing beside me — he was maybe four years old — while I was talking to his mother, who had come to get him, when a customer came in. A woman passing through, whom I had never seen before. She came up to the counter to pay for her purchases. Boaz's mother took a step back to make room for her. The customer saw Boaz, then looked at me and said these few words: "It's amazing how much your son looks like you." Sandrine, you can't imagine how ashamed I felt then. I didn't answer, I took the money she handed me, I bid her farewell and lowered my eyes to avoid those of Boaz's mother. Then I saw Boaz smiling at me, reassuring and happy, and when I raised my eyes, I saw his mother smiling at me, reassured. I was confused, and she smiled at me. She had already entrusted him to me.

Romain never speaks of her, and if he doesn't do so in your exhibition, Boaz will not be fully exhibited. You should tell him.

Amos

Dear Amos,

Reading your answer, I passed over the phrase “your mother knew him well” too quickly.

So you knew each other well. You were...a family. This had entirely escaped me.

You were bonded to Boaz by such a special relationship. Is it her you saw in him?

Sandrine



Dear Amos,

You say that you knew. That Boaz, for you, was as much the myth as the living young man. But the day when his mother entrusted him to you, the day you understood that you would be in some way responsible for the legend, were you not afraid?

You kept Boaz by your side afterwards unlike any of your children. He did not go off to university, he did not go away anywhere, he stayed with you at the shop to “stock the shelves” day after day. And the one time you let him leave...he never came back.

Did you give yourself the role of protecting him from his own legend?

Sandrine

Dear Sandrine,

I read somewhere, I don't remember where, a history or a myth — maybe I didn't read it, for that matter, maybe Malachie told me about it — wherein the gods, to stay in contact with men, sent their most beloved son to the earth and called him back to them as soon as he was grown, creating a void among men, and sending him again and calling him back, eternally — a constant cycle guaranteeing the vitality of the relationship between the two levels — until the day when the gods, themselves too saddened by his absence, decided not to send him anymore, but rather to keep him close to them and leave men abandoned, perhaps free.

Well, I always felt Boaz to be this son, but I never clearly articulated it; this is the first time I've done so, in fact. But I know he was more than just a myth, when he was alive.

At home, there were two Boazes; the son or the brother, and the other, the legend. In the legendary Boaz, yes, I could see his mother, her presence. But in the familiar Boaz, I saw nothing but the simple, delicate, discrete boy that he was. And our daily life zigzagged between the two Boazes. Between the boy that Malachie — and all the others — venerated and the other one who listened to my advice as I explained how to repaint the shutters. This alternation was certainly the cruelest to the two of us who stayed. That he had not just been an idea, a surface for the two of us. Or the bearer of a burden, as Romain says. But that he had also been alive.

It is the living boy, who smiled at me over breakfast in the morning and helped me stock the shop shelves during the day, whom I miss.

I don't know if his burden was necessary but it certainly was unjust. As is the way his memory is now used. His mother must have known everything that would happen. Maybe I knew it myself, for that matter. Maybe, in spite of that, I accepted her entrusting him to me because as it is written, their union was so much more precious than everything else it forgave.

Amos



Dear Amos,

You haven't exactly answered me. I'll ask the question in another way. Was Boaz's mother already the legend? Is it through her that you understood that the legend could not live? Was letting Boaz leave for Procida the sign that you accepted that he was also the legend?

You asked me who I would rather meet, the legend or the son. I am not in your shoes and I don't have a choice to make. As a reader, I am curious about the two characters, but above all, I lack the power to change the legend into the son. You alone, it seems, would be able to do it. Perhaps the legend exists because we want it to?

Sandrine

Dear Sandrine,

When Boaz's mother entrusted him to me, almost at his birth, everything was only intuition and possibilities. I was both happy and proud. But the day she really entrusted him to me is the day she died. And that day, I didn't have time to be afraid. Because it was on the evening of the same day that he was stolen from me. The very woman who brought news of their death took him with her.

On the other hand, you're right that later there was always some worry. But you know that when things are not said, when they are not clear, when one word can refer to different actions, the mind takes advantage of this vagueness. It chooses the hypothesis that best suits it. This is surely what I did. I stopped knowing. And it is myself, more than him, that I tried to protect from his legend.

You know, my son couldn't combine the two Boazes, but could only be knocked about, bounced between the two, fully being both of them in contradiction and chaos. So yes, I kept him by my side, as I did with none of my children, as you say (although he was my child). But I believe also that he wouldn't have wanted to be anywhere else. Because near me, he exalted in fully feeling like a son, and one of the two Boazes.

I'd like to ask you a question, Sandrine. If you could have met one of the two, the legend or my son, which one would you have chosen?

Amos

Dear Sandrine,

I'll start by answering you on two points that don't give me any difficulty: first of all, I don't have any more power than you do to transform the legend into my son, who was indeed both, and who couldn't have been one without the other. On the other hand, I knew before his mother died — as we all knew — that a tragic end awaited the legend, because the legend seemed to all of us then to be intimately linked to tragedy.

The rest of your comments are a bit trickier to deal with, which explains the time I've taken to answer.

A few days ago, at the shop, I told a friend — a customer who comes every day and always stays a while before leaving — about our conversation. The best I could. I talked to him about your questions. He helped me craft a response, which I unfortunately didn't write down and



which comes back to me confusedly now. I remember that he spoke to me of a psychoanalyst named Jung and his archetypes, of the collective unconscious and synchronicity, which he saw as a parallel for the legend, the community, and the designation of the first by the second. Everything was clear at the time. Here is what I have left.

I believe that the legend was, is, and will be — whether we want it to or not — in essence, like an archetype. And I realize, writing it, that this intuition seems to create a contradiction with what actually happened; we attributed this function to Boaz. But was it attributed to him arbitrarily? This is the point where my friend talked of synchronicity, of the collective desire for an archetype with the appearance of the boy in our lives. Was it an act of destiny?

As for his mother, was she already the legend? I understand your question, but I struggle to answer it. Because I'm afraid of all my intuitions fading away, disappearing the moment I change them into words. Because words are clear, as we expect them to be in the face of such a question, but the answer that comes to me, built only on my sensations, is vague, uncertain. Furthermore, it is within this uncertainty that the answer is true. So this is all I can say: perhaps she wasn't the legend but rather something else, that is certain, maybe magical? Perhaps near her one felt far from oneself? As one would feel in a fictional space?

Happy holidays,

Amos



## AMI BARAK CURATOR

Dear Romain,

First of all, I want to wish you a happy, prosperous new year, full of good luck and joy.

I've done my best to contribute to your project, and rather than interviewing a character, I've put together a series of questions without answers to send to you. Questions without question marks, even. I hope you'll make good use of them.

*Questions without answers or suspended answers*

The choice of names in Romain Kronenberg's book *Boaz* seems deliberate to me because they are all biblical in origin, which implies a further layer of sophistication. The story is not linear and throughout the pages, a countdown emerges, marked by two key moments around which the memories of Boaz's tragic destiny converge; for it is this primordial character who narrates the story as it reveals his misfortune, despite the tone and nuances of a happy childhood and a boundless friendship.

Boaz is a biblical figure from the time of Judges, one of the heroes of the book of Ruth, from which the evidence can be drawn that he is the great-grandfather of King David. Etymologically speaking, Boaz's name means that he is full of courage, that God gave him life and therefore destiny. Boaz is also the name given in the Bible to the column situated to the left of the entrance of the Temple of Solomon.

Amos, the adoptive father, also bears a biblical name meaning burden bearer, a name made emotionally significant by the narrative. Amos is a shepherd, a farmer of sycamores who became a prophet-writer spurred on by the idea of social justice. He denounced the injustices of his time and announced the wrath of God and the fall of the kingdom. As the adoptive father of the orphan Boaz, his mission is fulfilled.

The name of Malachie, Boaz's adoptive brother and intimate friend, and still a prophet, raises a small translation question for me. While the etymological meaning of the name is *my messenger*, the first meaning of the Hebrew word *malach* is *angel* (the meaning *messenger* came later with the Greek and Latin translations). So Malachie is *Boaz's angel*, a point which the book proves throughout its chapters.

The choice of the book's feminine character's name, Deborah, Malachie's sister and Amos' daughter, seems just as significant. Deborah is a complex biblical figure with a feminist slant, and her name means honeybee, symbolizing intelligence and devotion. She is the only female judge mentioned in the Old Testament and one of its rare prophetesses. Deborah's personality does in some way fit the biblical model: she is faithful, loyal, calm, and measured; she knows how to be friendly and warm. She is the unfortunate one who must in the end bear the burden of the abandonment and the discovery of both her blood brother and her adoptive brother's tragic fate, the Achilles and Patroclus of the Kronenbergien opus.

Ami...cably



**EMMANUELLE LEQUEUX**  
**ART CRITIC**

Dear Deborah,

It feels a little strange to write to you since we don't know each other. I've only read a book telling the story of your family and I know very little of your life. Speaking of which, I was curious if you had read it? A man named Romain Kronenberg gave it to me; have you met him?

I ask because he often speaks of you, yet I get the impression that he is absent from your lives...

It is difficult to ask him about it because he often breaks off with a lump in his throat.

It is strange because the book lacks a time setting and I don't know if what it relates happened a long time ago or just yesterday. I don't want to be indiscrete and intrude in the chronology of your life, but might I just have an idea of the space of time that separates us from this narrative?

One is so eager to know more about you!

Did you ever finish your studies?

That gentleness, your gentleness...were you able to keep it?

Did Amos survive the death of his two sons?

It is strange indeed to become so attached to people and then suddenly deprived of any news of them.

Do you often remember the day when you learned that Boaz's parents were dead?

And what were his parents like? Did they know who he was?

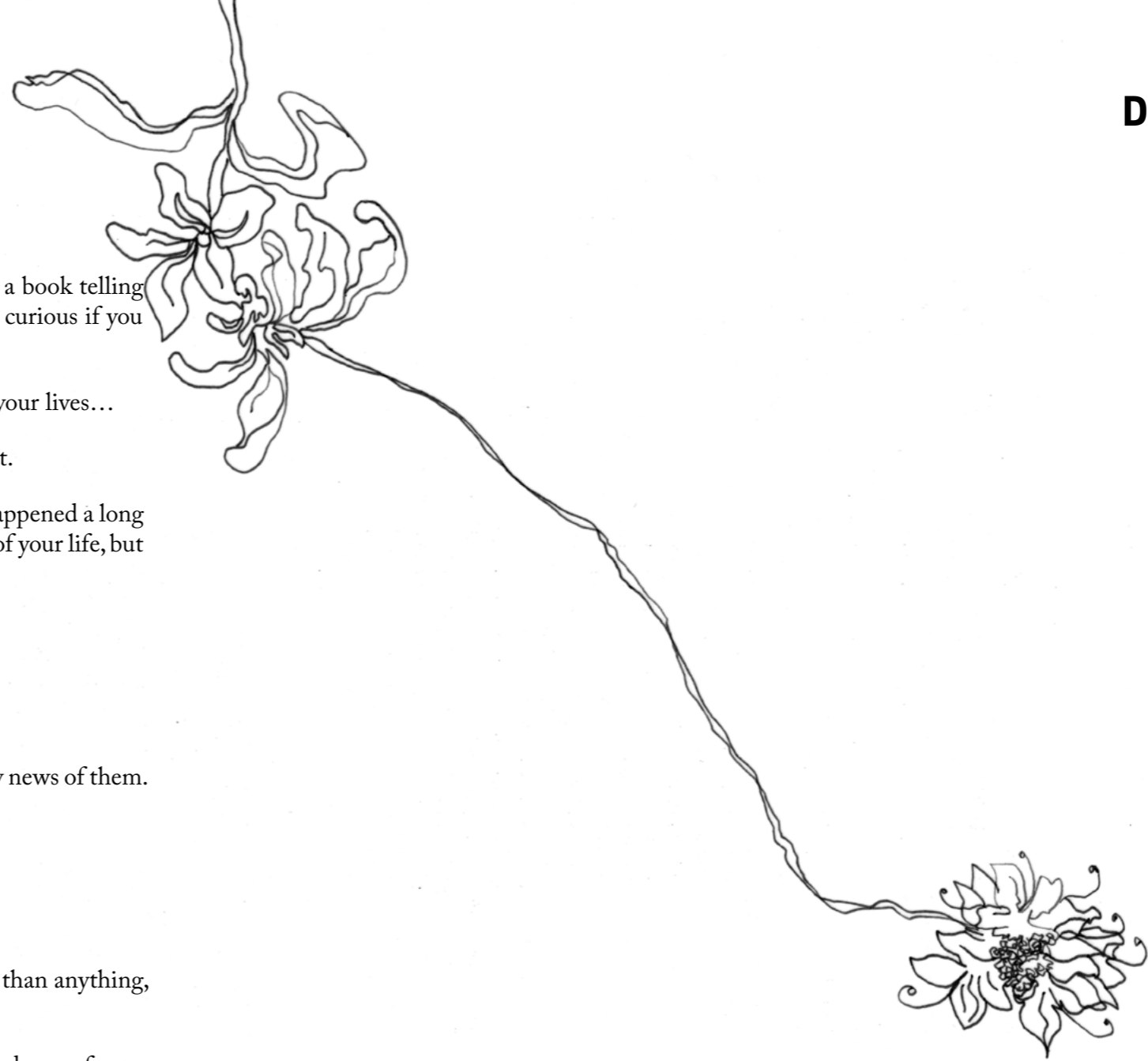
Did you also lose your mother? There doesn't seem to be any trace of her anywhere.

Essentially, the book tells us that the love shared by Malachie and Boaz was stronger than anything, and didn't include you; did you sometimes feel that you had been sacrificed?

Sometimes we get the impression the Boaz deprived you of your brother, or deprived you of your role as a protective, maternal sister. Did you ever resent him for it?

Didn't you have any presentiment the day of their passing? Or a presentiment that this end was the only one possible?

I'm sorry if my questions seem indiscrete, especially as you seem to not be the most verbose person. But Boaz is the legend, and you are the last person alive to have known him so well. Are you still alive, in fact?



**DEBORAH**

Dear Emmanuelle,

This morning after weeks of gloomy weather that Malachie would certainly not have liked, I opened my eyes and saw the sun everywhere, all around my room, like a liberation. I got up and found your message, for which I thank you. I don't know if I'll be able to answer yet. Some of your questions made me feel dizzy. I'll do my best.

Am I alive? Feeling lost before your question, I looked up the definition of the word this morning. Life, the whole ensemble of phenomena and essential functions manifesting themselves from birth until death and pertaining to the living. If me getting up, rejoicing in the sunlight, and then reading your message, understand you, and answering you count as essential functions pertaining to the living — which I believe they are — then I am alive.



It is maybe a life on the margins, inhabited by fewer people than your world and where everything is simpler. A type of simplicity that allows one to concentrate on certain aspects in more detail. Perhaps it is a life where time rolls around itself like music sometimes does, repeating itself in waves. So maybe my brothers' death — Boaz's death — extracted us from this primordial time in which we were sunk, and made time begin. So how much time away are we from one other, Emmanuelle? I don't know. Perhaps less than we think, if we want.

I know Romain well. Sometimes I even feel like I hear his voice when I write, and I have to shake myself back to who I am. But I've only read a few snippets of his book, which is now advertised by the community with large posters on the streets. Yesterday on the way to the shop I saw written on a billboard up against the blind wall of a building:

But you know, I am there, even when I am far away

I knew that phrase, I knew it was Boaz who said it to my father. I can hear his voice say it, delicately and lightly; and I see how they portray it now — the authority of the signs and capital letters — and I am blown away by the contrast. And then I tell myself that if one of us has been sacrificed, it's him. First because he had to die, but above all because even when he was gone, he remained, betrayed.

I believe that people everywhere need his name, wherever they see the distance, wherever they dream of the infinite. But I think that they don't see the trick coming — or they let themselves be tricked. If they saw the function that was assigned to my brother, if they were conscious of the mechanism that traps them between Boaz, their desire, and themselves, I might be less critical... Excuse me if I digress.

When Malachie and Boaz disappeared, that very evening outside our house, the ones who forbid me to go in and see the bodies of my brothers called my father. The next morning, we were all at the harbor, waiting for him. When he got off the boat, we went up to the house in silence, walking along the cross-lined streets. The house of my summers, of our summers, full of our laughter, of the memory of my brothers. My father went in, and when he came back out, I understood that he had left something behind inside. Something that animated him. That he had been sacrificed as well. I don't remember if I finished my studies. I don't remember anything that I did afterwards, when I wasn't helping my father. And our lives were calm. And empty.

Wishing you all the best,

Deborah



# CREDITS

## EXHIBITION

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**A** la Fondation  
des Artistes

## FILM

*Boaz*  
by Romain Kronenberg  
& Boaz

with the participation of

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