

**PROJECT & CONSULTING AGENCY
ERNA HECEY
LUXEMBOURG**

PRESS RELEASE

Luxembourg and Grande Région, European Capital of Culture 2007

**“Douleur Exquise”: Sophie Calle
Mise en scène: Frank Gehry & Edwin Chan**

**Curator of the exhibition: Erna Hecey
Rotunda 1 de Bonnevoie, Luxembourg**

22 June - 9 September 2007

Opening Thursday 21 June 2007 6 to 9 pm

Luxembourg European Cultural Capital 2007 presents a special collaborative project by artist Sophie Calle and architects Frank Gehry and Edwin Chan.

This exceptional project, involving a mix of architectural design and visual art, is the result of a long friendship between Sophie Calle and Frank Gehry. Calle and Gehry have known each other since 1984. As they like to say, she met him in L.A., he met her in Nîmes. Their first collaboration was an art telephone booth on the Garigliano Bridge in Paris, which opened last December. *Exquisite Pain* for Luxembourg 2007 is their first common venture on such a large scale.

In 1984, Calle was awarded a grant to go to Japan. At the end of her 92 day voyage she was abandoned by her lover, who failed to show up for a planned meeting in New Delhi. Deeply distressed by the break-up, upon her return to France Calle could only speak of the journey's unfortunate ending. Eventually she began asking others to recount their own most painful experiences. Through this process of storytelling and repetition, Calle's pain was slowly alleviated. It was more than fifteen years later, however, that she decided to transform the whole sequence of events into an artwork.

Calle's *Exquisite Pain* is a powerful visual and texture narrative recounting foreign travel and loss of love, suffering and artistic catharsis. It is the diary of a journey from Paris to Tokyo, passing by the Transsiberian Express from Moscow to Vladivostok, and the tale of a missed rendezvous at the Imperial Hotel room 261 in New Delhi.

On a grand scale, yet introspective and intimate, this new edition of the piece is set in a specially designed installation by Frank Gehry and Edwin Chan for Rotunda 1. Gehry and Chan's unique mise-en-scène adds significantly to the beauty and poetic drama of the work.

Exquisite Pain unfolds in three parts, like an opera or a theatrical production.

The first part of the exhibition consists of 92 photographs and ephemera, recording each day of Calle's trip preceding the missed rendezvous. This diary is presented retrospectively as countdown to the artist's rejection and despair, each photograph or document stamped with a number indicating the remaining amount of 'days until unhappiness'.

Part two is a three dimensional reconstruction of room 261 of the Imperial Hotel in New Delhi, the site of Calle's amorous tragedy, as interpreted by Gehry and Chan.

In the third part—the exorcism—Calle's own story is juxtaposed with narratives of pain and heartache from others. In this dynamic process of repetition and variation the original tale is transformed and the pain evaporated.

Presented as 36 diptychs embroidered on light linen, the left side shows a photograph of the red telephone in the

Imperial Hotel room where she received the bad news and a version of Calle's story, the right the story of someone else's 'worst pain' along with a related photograph.

Rotunda 1 de Bonnevoie is a late 19th Century industrial building that was dedicated to the maintenance of locomotives and coaches. It is 50 meters in diameter with inside heights ranging from 6 to 8 and 11 to 15 meters at the top of the cupola. The perimeter walls are constructed from yellowish stone; the inside columns are cast iron; the ceiling of the cupola is made up of wooden boards painted grey. It is an impressively vast space with beautiful natural light streaming in through high windows around the whole building. For the exhibition Frank Gehry and Edwin Chan will create a circular labyrinth using reflecting materials that highlights the emergence and fading of thoughts and memories at play in Calle's work. The scenography explores the dynamics of natural light and specific architecture of the Rotunda.

Sophie Calle is an internationally renowned French writer, photographer, installation artist, and conceptual artist. She is famous for her sleuth-like explorations of human relationships, which led her, for example, to follow a stranger in the streets of Venice and document his every move, or to find work as a hotel chambermaid in order to photograph the belongings of the hotel's guests. In her different projects, Calle immerses herself in examinations of voyeurism and identity. Often playing roles or adopting guises, she recasts her own identity to reconstruct or document strangers' lives, examining the relationship between the artist and the objects of her investigations.

Sophie Calle will be showing at this summer's Venice Biennale in the French Pavilion. She selected Daniel Buren as the curator for her exhibition.

Mr. Gehry received his Bachelor of Architecture degree from the University of Southern California in 1954, and he studied City Planning at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design. In subsequent years, Mr. Gehry has built an architectural career that has spanned four decades and produced public and private buildings in America, Europe and Asia. His work has earned Mr. Gehry several of the most significant awards in the architectural field, including the Arnold W. Brunner Memorial Prize in Architecture, the Pritzker Prize, the Wolf Prize in Art (Architecture), the Praemium Imperiale Award, the Dorothy and Lillian Gish Award, the National Medal of Arts, the Friedrich Kiesler Prize, the American Institute of Architects Gold Medal, and the Royal Institute of British Architects Gold Medal. Significant projects include: the Hotel Marqués de Riscal in Elciago, Spain; the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao in Bilbao, Spain; the DZ Bank Building in Berlin, Germany; Der Neue Zollhof, an office complex in Düsseldorf, Germany; the Jay Pritzker Pavilion and BP Bridge in Millennium Park in Chicago, Illinois; the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, California; the IAC Building in New York, New York; the Lou Ruvo Brain Institute in Las Vegas, Nevada; the Princeton Science Library in Princeton, New Jersey; and a phone booth co-designed with Sophie Calle for Paris' revived tramway line.

Edwin Chan joined Frank O. Gehry & Associates upon graduating from the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University in 1985. Since then, Mr. Chan has worked on many of the firm's most significant projects including: the Nationale-Nederlanden Building in Prague, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, the Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum in Minneapolis, and the hotel at the Marques de Riscal Winery in El Ciego, Spain. Currently Mr. Chan is a Partner of the firm, working directly with Frank Gehry on the design of a number of projects that includes an office building for Novartis International in Basel, Switzerland and the Louis Vuitton Foundation for Creation in Paris, France. In addition, Mr. Chan has also designed The Art of Motorcycle Exhibition for the Guggenheim Museums in New York, Bilbao and Las Vegas, as well as the set designs for the opera Ariadne Auf Naxos by Richard Strauss in Los Angeles.

Olivier Boissière

Our special adviser is a longtime friend to Ms. Sophie Calle and Mr. Gehry

Erna Hecey has been working in the field of contemporary art for over twenty years. In 1996 she started the Erna Hecey Gallery in Luxembourg, which in 2005 moved to a specially designed space in Brussels. In the same year, she also founded the Erna Hecey Project & Consultant Agency in Luxembourg for proposing and managing public and private artistic projects. She has worked closely with many internationally prominent artists and has collaborated with museums and art institutions around the world.

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