

Monday, October 10, 2011

## Culture Count

### Master Plaster Blaster

"Sugar, spice and everything nice" might be what little girls are made of, but grown women have a few more ingredients to add. This is true for artist Amelie Chabannes, who this summer amassed a wide range of objects and images to represent the depth of her identity. She then encased them in plaster so that she could excavate, explore and explode them live at the French Institute Alliance Française from Oct. 12-16 in her performance installation, "Intimate, Immensity and Lagerstatten."

The term "Lagerstatten" refers to a territory rich in well-preserved fossils, and Ms. Chabannes wants "immensity" to feel both like a staged archeological dig and like "entering a being."

The initial idea for the piece came to the Paris-born, Brooklyn-based artist after she stumbled upon a metaphor about the self

as a building in Gaston Bachelard's "Poetics of Space," a book she is "bananas for," she said. "I've read it again and again for 15 years. Everything started from that."

For traditional galleries, this is a challenging piece. For starters, there's nothing to sell. But FIAF's Crossing the Line festival, which often supports genre and commerce-defying work, encouraged her mission to "get out of this classical thing of making art in the studio and then showing it."

Ms. Chabannes will be uncovering herself each day from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Given the kind of energy self-exploration requires, we wondered about lunch, and she said she'd be taking 15-minute breaks.

But don't the French disdain rushed meals? "Totally," she said. "It's against my cultural identity."

—Lizzie Simon

To 're-enact the search for self,' artist Amelie Chabannes amassed a wide range of objects to represent her identity, then encased them in plaster. For five days at the Stephan Stoyanov Gallery, she'll excavate, explore and explode them.

Here's some of what's in the plaster:



**811**  
Small fish replicas



**147**  
Yards of wool



**581**  
Advertisements with 1950s housewives



**117**  
Animal horns



**447**  
Religious ecstasies



**37**  
Bags of: Curry (9), ashes (8), thyme (7), sand (6), salt (6), dry dune flowers (1)



**202**  
Rock candles



**25**  
Engraved plates