

Le sous bois, 2009

ph.: Isabelle Levistre - t: Emanuela Cucuzza

## “Anamnèse”... of a mother



Born in the seaside town of Le Havre, **Isabelle Levistre** has always been passionate about photography.

She decided to dedicate herself fully to her passion in 2006.

Photography enables her to explore her interior

world but also to open with the others. Always in search for sincerity. The photographic act is for her a shape of introspection on emotional and physical processes. It is through these feelings that she builds her images. Isabelle Levistre lives in Paris. Her works have been shown in various exhibitions, in particular in Paris-Brussels-Zurich. Little Big Galerie Galerie TenArts Fotofever Paris and Brussels. Le Sous-bois - Série anamnèse - Collection Maison Européenne de la Photographie Paris. Arbor essence III- Collection Pierce-Honolulu.

**Many artists develop the basis of their creativity on their childhood, their memories, whether such memories are true or altered over time... Is this the case also with you?**

“For the genesis of Anamnèse, it was rather the absence of my memories which was the basis of photographic work. I had very few memories of my childhood. Through the prism of the games of my children, I tried to find, to reconstruct my memories. What seemed to me to be this state of childhood, between games intimacy. Everything is fragile and uncertain.”

**Becoming a mother marks definitely a transition, with the closing of a door in one's inner world, if only to gather the strength necessary to guide and protect your children... How have your perception of life and artistic vein changed with the birth of your daughters?**

“Becoming a mother is a major change. We have two missions: transmission and responsibility. We



le plongeur, 2009

don't close a door, we open a new one. The look of our inner child is there but also the mother that we become will have to assert itself. We feel what we want to give them, we want to feed them from the inside and also protect them.

My perception of life has become more global I had to be less centered on myself. My artistic sensibility developed and became unavoidable at that time.”

**How did your collaboration with David Harris come about? Do you identify with his introduction to your book?**

“With my translator we looked for a poem that could accompany the text of the author (@Sophie Bernard). We could not do a literal translation. The poem of David Harris has established itself quite naturally. Indeed, I identify myself fairly well with the text.”

**Some of your photos seem clouded memories of the present, as if your photographic eye lived the**

**present like a memory, while you are stuck in the past, astonished to see yourself reflected...**

“The photographs of the series were taken very spontaneously. I could say that it was almost a third eye that guided me. The advantage of shooting twins is that they are entirely in their world. I did not have to interfere or guide, just to be attentive. Listening to my feelings about what for me reflected the world of childhood when I was watching them. I can say that the camera allowed me this bridge between present and past. I was looking to myself through my daughters.”

**Does your perspective of your daughters' childhood call to mind any memories or reinterpretations of your own experiences?**

“I do not think that the childhood of my daughters reminds me of my own memories, because I don't have so much of it. On the other hand I think I have rewritten, which could have been



La piscine, 2009

my memories of this period. Memories a little erased (superimposition). This period held and the memories that are attached to it are necessarily a little confused, necessarily subjective between dream and reality."

#### What do you miss of that period in particular?

"I lacked a form of spontaneity, of carelessness. By observing my children. I have found in their games this space of creation where everything is possible, nothing is anchored in reality at this age between early childhood and pre-adolescence."

#### What was your work before taking up photography full time?

"Before I did photography full time, I worked in head recruitment. I learned to observe, to listen to others."

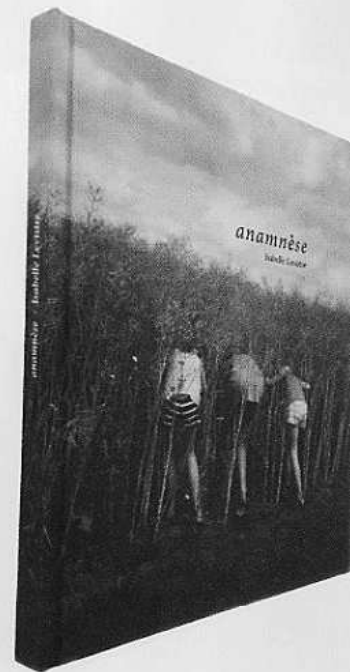
#### What does Anamnèse represent in your artistic production?

"At one point I wanted to do photography. I've always done it but for me. When I started this series, I learned silver photography, especially in the darkroom. Take the time to make pictures. Do not see it in the moment as with the digital. Develop them. It is a whole process, slow and very

intimate. Anamnèse is more than a work, it's a story. This series was written in time over a period of almost 7 years. This first series allowed me to explore my inner world. I endeavor to express my feelings through my personal experiences. Identity, family story. In the end, the realization of a book seemed obvious. I've been doing other series since, *Mélancholia*, *Arbor Essence*, *Néréides*."

#### If I recall, you funded this project with a fundraising campaign... How did you do it?

"The idea of a book had been there for a long time. I did not know anyone in the editing. So I started by editing, scanning negatives, thinking the overall budget, and then trying to find an editor. Gildas Lepetit-Castel is a photographer and a publisher, he has his own associative publishing house. I contacted him at first for advice, he wished to see my photos and then the series made him want to support me. We started on this project together. The crowdfunding campaign was really essential because it guaranteed the printing of the book, which is the most important cost. Afterwards, with the help of social networks and my professional and private contacts, we raised funds with a campaign that lasted 5 weeks. It's quite nerve-racking because you have to raise it to the end..."



Isabelle Levistre

"Anamnèse"

350 copies

**Publisher:** Editions GLC-editions

[www.glc-editions.com](http://www.glc-editions.com)

**Photos:** ©Isabelle Levistre

**Text:** ©Sophie Bernard

**Concept and book design:**

GildasLepetit-Castel & Isabelle Levistre

20 x 26 cm

**Pages:** 96 pages, 62 photographs. Black and white.

**Print:** Graphiu, Ghent, Belgium

**Price:** 39€

[www.glc-editions.com/livres/anamnese-isabelle-levistre](http://www.glc-editions.com/livres/anamnese-isabelle-levistre)

#### Do you have any advice for professionals who intend to fund their photo books in this way?

"Advice? Yes!!! You have to be relentless. Many photo books come out regularly. We must already ask ourselves the question: why do you make a book? Is this necessary to the series? Do you make a photo album of your work or a book with a screen. What do we want to share with the reader? A photo book in general draws between 300 and 500 copies for a first book, will it find its audience? Then, the number of images, format, layout, overall assess, distribution... For a photographer to make a first book, is an assault course... The advice I would give is above all to ask yourself the right questions. Make a book when you think it is complementary to your work. As a final point to your work. I was told to make a book on Anamnèse very quickly in 2009 when I started to exhibit, but the work was still on so I waited to do it and I do not regret it. Taking time, thinking of why and being honest with your work is essential."

#### Did you choose the print, the paper and the set-up yourself?

"I had desires but not experience. My editor has been able to guide me. The choice of the papers was made according to the spirit of the book. The

canvas cover for example of the book of Anamnèse was very important and already gave an indication on the photographs. The reader must want to open the book, to stir up curiosity. My editor GLC-Editions and I chose together every part of the book. The layout also requires a lot of reflection and testing, but we had the frame of the book, so finally the images were set up quite easily after few concessions..."

#### What role did the publisher play in this project?

My publisher, Gildas Lepetit-Castel had a major role. He helped me for all the steps. His accompaniment, his experience and his listening were very important for me. He had experience from crowdfunding to printing. He was enthusiastic. Gildas is more than a publisher, first, he is a photographer. His eye on my work, the respect he had for my images was very important. It is also the success of a book. Communication and mutual understanding were essential in the realization of the book. I was very lucky to make the book of Anamnèse with him.

[www.isabelle-photographe.com](http://www.isabelle-photographe.com)