

CATHERINE GRENIER

## SOPHIE RISTELHUEBER



Catherine  
Grenier  
*Sophie  
Ristelhueber*  
*La guerre  
intérieure*

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## INTERVIEW

Why does one become an artist? How? To what extent is one an artist? Guided by direct questions from Catherine Grenier, Sophie Ristelhueber describes the atypical advance of an artist for whom nothing predetermined this late, but accomplished, destiny. With no concessions even to herself, and without pretence to something else, the artist evokes the stages of passion which imposed itself suddenly, like an interior necessity. A passion that took her to war-torn lands, into their conflicts and wounds, in search of the traces of war and its scars. Lucid and sincere, this artist's confession constitutes a perfect introduction to contemporary art, its finalities and what is at stake. She is witness to an aesthetic quest which, overturning the normal course of life, pushes the creator to venture further and further from themselves.

Sophie Ristelhueber (\*1949, Paris) is one of the great figures of art photography today. Since her foundational work on the city of Beirut destroyed in the war at the beginning of the 1980s, she has followed a demanding path that tests the conditions in which the real is seen. She has developed an engaged reflection on territory and its history through a singular approach to landscape, which is conceived as a space that carries the traces of the major upheavals of human activity and memory (historical wars, recent conflicts, civil wars, earthquakes), questioning, like an archeologist, the marks left by man on the surface, leaving the stigmata of history visible. Implying a complete

personal engagement and a real experience of the land, Ristelhueber's work borrows from journalism its tools (photography) and one of its major themes (war), but bends them to the processes of art: her oeuvre is not built around a documentary project to represent, but, starting from an aesthetic project, to interrogate the notion of trace, on the body and on the place.

Catherine Grenier is the Adjunct Director of the Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Pompidou. An art historian, she is the author of numerous publications and texts about contemporary art.

The book is part of the Documents series, co-published with Les presses du réel and dedicated to critical writings.