

**[EXCERPT]**

Madeleine Monette

**La mer, au feu**

*A Sea Fire*

Translated by Oana Avasilichioaei

Original engravings by

Véronique de Guitarre

*Signum Éditions*

*Paris, 2017*

*The poems of La mer, au feu / A Sea Fire were written after Hurricane Sandy struck the East coast of the United States in 2012. As a post-tropical cyclone, Sandy caused a vast fire in Breezy Point, amid flooding at high tide. In a small community by the Atlantic Ocean, not far from Manhattan, houses were flooded and on fire. Another devastating climate spasm. The impact of climate change, flush with earth and sea.*

*For Angela and her sons, Ian and  
Max, in Belle Harbor*

## ***A Sea Fire***

the fire's chill, its odor  
of tar and stagnant pools  
among the oozing charred  
debris, razed scenery sunken  
in black water, blurred flat  
mosaic of the spongy landscape,  
from eroded foundations  
to earthy ponds, the devastation  
of silted dumping grounds,  
remains deposited in the short  
memory of fresh mud for novice  
archaeologists, beyond  
the reckless desires of pillagers

fury of tenacious flares  
on the islet of smoky lights,  
sudden shifts of russet clouds  
and irradiant flashes, the flames  
flying from roof to roof, driven  
into zigzags by the hurricane,  
set off explosions of light caged  
inside scorched wood frames,  
barely standing, the inferno reigns  
encircled by a torrential ocean,  
until a still morning of scattered  
embers, smoldering mounds  
in the sea earth, until the gentle  
rare flames that still flicker  
in tents of collapsed girders,  
dying sighs of sooty marshes

there are fewer last nights  
than children in Belle Harbor,  
hang on! no drowning or burning,  
my little one, hold tight the rope,  
trust the human rescue chain, the water  
won't erase you with all the rest,  
keep moving, stay afloat!  
mouth to the sky

around the neighborhood  
set ablaze, as the vanished beach  
slides towards abyssal depths,  
ragged sand cliffs, the caved-in  
houses sink, twisted, dismantled,  
into an underwater fog crowded  
with roofs staircases windows,  
jumble distending as it plunges:  
the boundary between water  
and earth has given way

[...]

© 2017 Madeleine Monette

EXCERPT from *La mer, au feu / A Sea Fire*,  
translation by poet Oana Avasilichioaei, artist book  
with original engravings and collages by Véronique  
de Guitarre, Signum Éditions, Paris, 2017.

BAnQ's Artist Books Heritage Collection.

## **Madeleine Monette**

A novelist, short-story writer and poet living in New York City, Madeleine Monette has published the novels *Les Rouleurs* (2007), *La Femme furieuse* (1997), *Amandes et Melon* (1991), *Petites Violences* (1982) and *Le Double suspect* (Robert-Cliche Award 1980), as well as a book of poetry, *Ciel à outrances* (2013), translated into English as *Lashing Skies* (2014). An artist book, *La mer, au feu (A Sea Fire)*, with a poetic suite by Madeleine Monette translated by poet Oana Avasilichioaei and engravings by French visual artist Véronique de Guitarre, was published in Paris in 2017 and is now part of BAnQ's Artist Books Heritage Collection. Her novels and poems were short-listed for many awards in France, Québec and the United States, including the Prix Marguerite Yourcenar (United States) and Prix France-Québec Philippe-Rossillon (France). *Skatepark*, a new edition of *Les Rouleurs*, appeared in Paris in 2015.

[www.madeleinemonette.com](http://www.madeleinemonette.com)

## **Véronique de Guitarre**

A visual artist, Véronique de Guitarre lives and works in Paris. Her work has been shown at the Solidarnosc Museum in Poland, at the Tsuki-no-Niwa Gallery in Japan, at the Galerie du Génie de la Bastille - Editions Signum in Paris (2017); at the Givlowe Gallery in Portugal - *DOK* (2016); at the Pionova Gallery in Poland - *Chantier naval* (2015); and at the Galerie Europa in Paris - *Ports industriels: terrains d'aventure* (2013). She created the engravings, linocuts and collages of many artist books published with Éditions Signum: *La mer, au feu (A Sea Fire)*, a poetry suite by Madeleine Monette, translated by poet Oana Avasilichioaei, with engravings (2017), BAnQ's Artist Books Heritage Collection ; *Un jour, une main / d'enfant s'est réfugiée / là*, poems by Emmanuèle Lagrange and engravings (2015); *Dialogue avec le figuier*, poem by Maurice Gravaud-Lestieux and linocuts (2014); *Observation minutieuse d'un glissement*, poems by Emmanuèle Lagrange and engravings (2013); *The Bed of Flowers*, text by Tanya Mendonsa, photographs by Laurence Toussaint, linocuts and collages (2013); *Les agapanthes*, short story by Anne Bolori and engravings (2011); *Cette ivresse première: être au monde*, 9 poems by Maurice Lestieux and engravings (2008).

[www.veroniquedeguitarre.com](http://www.veroniquedeguitarre.com)