

ARGOS MAG

Hans Op de Beeck

Shelly Silver

Performing NYC

Angel Vergara

Santiago

Emanuele Carcano

on Alga Margheri

Ecran d'Art



EXHIBITIONS

- Hans Op de Beeck,**
Sea of Tranquility 04
- Celebrating emptiness*
by Emmanuelle Lequeux 06

- Shelly Silver,**
here, his 這裡, 他的 12
- THE TIME OF US*
by Nicole Wolf 15

ARTIST CONTRIBUTION

- Angel Vergara Santiago** 22

BLACK BOX

- Down Low Up High –**
Performing the Vernacular
curated by Barbara Clausen 24
- Performing NYC -*
the permanent reinvention
of urban life
by Barbara Clausen 27

MEDIA LIBRARY

- Emanuele Carcano**
over Alga Marghen
door Ive Stevenheydens 30

NEW ARTISTS IN DISTRIBUTION 34

MEDIA LIBRARY BOOK SAMPLER 37

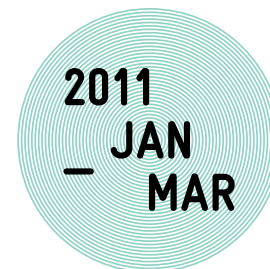
EXTRA MUROS

- PERFORMATIK 2011 38
- ECRAN D'ART 39

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS 41

INFO & VISIT 42

CALENDAR 44



(NL) Het nieuwe jaar begint voor ons met een magazine. *Argos Mag*, een nieuw discursief project over onze activiteiten, verschijnt drie maal per jaar. Naast informatie over de lopende tentoonstellingen bij Argos Centre for Art & Media biedt het blad achtergrond in de vorm van essays of gesprekken met kunstenaars en specialisten. Dit voorjaar hebben we drie grote projecten lopen: Hans Op de Beeck stelt met *Sea of Tranquility* een recent ensemble van werken tentoon en Shelly Silvers installatie *here, his 這裡, 他的* bevat ondermeer een nieuwe film. In onze projectiezaal Black Box tonen we *Down Low Up High*, een programma met choreografieën voor performances die plaatsvonden in het New Yorkse straatbeeld van de jaren 1970.

U leest er in *Argos Mag* alles over, alsook over screenings buitenshuis, over distributie- en conserveringsactiviteiten en over de nieuwe aanwinsten die u in onze mediathek kan raadplegen. Als bonus levert Angel Vergara Santiago, een kunstenaar waarmee Argos nauwe banden onderhoudt, in het hart van dit nummer een eerste kunstenaarsbijdrage.

Tot slot wensen we u voor 2011 veel warmte toe. We begroeten u graag in Argos!

(FR) Pour nous, la nouvelle année commencera par le lancement d'un magazine. Paraissant trois fois l'an, *Argos Mag* est un nouveau projet proposant un discours sur nos activités. Vous trouverez des informations sur les expositions en cours chez Argos Centre for Art & Media, ainsi que des essais et des interviews avec des artistes et des spécialistes. L'hiver d'Argos est placé sous le signe de trois projets majeurs : Hans Op de Beeck livrera une ensemble d'œuvres récentes sous le titre *Sea of Tranquility* ; Shelly Silver présentera l'installation *here, his 這裡, 他的* avec notamment un nouveau film ; dans notre salle de projection Black Box, on pourra découvrir *Down Low Up High*, une compilation de choréographies des performances créées dans les rues de New York dans les années 1970.

Argos Mag vous en donnera tous les détails, tout en vous informant sur nos projections extérieures, nos activités de distribution et de conservation et les nouvelles acquisitions disponibles pour consultation dans notre médiathèque. En bonus, on trouvera au cœur du premier numéro une première contribution artistique par Angel Vergara Santiago, artiste cher à Argos.

Pour terminer, nous vous adressons nos vœux les plus chaleureux pour 2011. Au plaisir de vous rencontrer ou de vous revoir chez Argos !

(EN) For us, the new year starts with a magazine. *Argos Mag*, a new discursive project on our activities, appears three times a year. In addition to information on current exhibitions at Argos Centre for Art and Media, it provides background in the form of essays and conversations with artists and specialists. This winter we have three major projects: in *Sea of Tranquility*, Hans Op de Beeck shows an ensemble of recent work, and Shelly Silver's installation *here, his 這裡, 他的* includes a new film. In our Black Box projection room we are showing *Down Low Up High*, a programme of choreographies for performances that took place in the streets of New York in the 70s.

You can read all about this in *Argos Mag*, and also about screenings elsewhere, distribution and conservation activities and the new acquisitions you can consult in our media library. As an bonus, Angel Vergara Santiago, an artist with whom Argos has close links, delivers the first artist contribution for *Argos Mag*.

Finally, we would like to give you our warmest wishes for 2011. We look forward to welcoming you to Argos!

ARGOS
CENTRE FOR
ART & MEDIA

HANS OP DE BEECK

SEA OF TRANQUILLITY

25.01–02.04.2011

(NL) Het werk van Hans Op de Beeck (1969) omvat sculpturen, installaties, video's, animatiefilms, fotografisch werk, tekeningen, schilderijen, muziek, geluid en tekst. Zijn werk vormt een reflectie over de condition humaine; onze problematische omgang met tijd, ruimte en met elkaar in een hedendaagse omgeving. Het resultaat is ontegensprekelijk fictief, geconstrueerd en geësceneerd: het is aan de toeschouwer om het beeld als een soort parallelrealiteit te aanvaarden, of het te relativiseren als niets meer dan een visuele constructie.

Tijdens een korte residentie in het Franse Saint-Nazaire in 2008 raakte de kunstenaar geïntrigeerd door het merkwaardige WOII-verleden en de naoorlogse heropbouw van het havenstadje, waarvan de werven 's werelds grootste cruise liners produceren. De Queen Mary 2, toen net voltooid, leek Op de Beeck, net als vandaag de Burj Khalifa in Dubai (het hoogste torengebouw ter wereld), een passende metafoor voor

ons geloof in oneigenlijke waarden en in concepten als werk, vrijetijdsbesteding en de consumptie van luxe. We hanteren vandaag categorieën als 'de hoogste', 'de eerste' of 'de grootste', maar wat zeggen die termen over de werkelijke kwaliteit van iets?

De tentoonstelling is geconcipieerd als een totaalinstallatie; een evocatie van een klein, historisch aandoend museum dat we na sluitingsuur lijken te betreden en dat opgedragen lijkt te zijn aan een (fictieve) mythische cruise liner, de *Sea of Tranquillity*. De ruimtelijke installatie biedt geen tekstuele toelichting, enkel beelden: een omvangrijk schaalmodel van het schip, sculpturen van de kapitein en een kamermeisje, grote vitrinekasten, een evocatie van een nachtelijke slaapcontainersite en een reeks zwart-wit aquarellen. Centraal staat een middellange film, een combinatie van acteurswerk en digitaal gegenereerde 3D-omgevingen, waarin de kijker een nachtelijk bezoek brengt aan het raadselachtige schip.

Sea of Tranquillity is een coproductie van Argos, Centre for Art & Media, Le Grand Café (Saint-Nazaire, Frankrijk), Kunstmuseum Thun (Zwitserland) en CAB (Burgos, Spanje).

(FR) L'œuvre de Hans Op de Beeck (1969) englobe sculptures, installations, vidéos, films d'animation, travail photographique, dessins, peintures, musique, montages sonores et textes. L'artiste s'y livre à une réflexion sur la condition humaine et notre rapport problématique au temps, à l'espace et à autrui dans l'environnement contemporain. Le résultat en est incontestablement fictionnel, construit, mis en scène: c'est au spectateur d'accepter ces images comme une sorte de réalité parallèle, ou de rester à distance et n'y voir que de pures constructions visuelles.

A l'occasion d'un bref séjour à Saint-Nazaire en 2008, l'artiste fut frappé par l'étonnant passé de cette ville portuaire, marqué par le souvenir de la deuxième guerre mondiale et la reconstruction d'après-guerre. Ses chantiers navals produisent les plus grands paquebots du monde. Le Queen Mary 2, juste sorti de cale à l'époque – mais aussi le Burj Khalifa à Dubaï, le gratte-ciel le plus haut du monde – semblèrent à Op de Beeck une métaphore exacte de notre croyance, irréaliste et déformée, en des valeurs et concepts tels que le travail, le temps libre et la consommation de luxe. Nous y mettons en avant des catégories superlatives : « le plus haut », « le premier », « le plus grand », mais dans quel sens ces désignations chargent-elles la qualité essentielle des choses ?

L'exposition se donne à voir comme une « installation totale » – l'évocation d'un petit musée un peu désuet où il nous semble entrer après l'heure de fermeture. L'espace paraît être consacré au *Sea of Tranquillity*, un paquebot mythique (et fictif). L'installation, dépourvue de tout commentaire textuel, n'offre que des images visuelles, inscrites dans l'espace : une monumentale version sculptée de ce vaisseau imaginaire, des mannequins représentant le capitaine et une femme de chambre, quelques grandes vitrines, une évocation des couchages, une série d'aquarelles en noir et blanc. Au centre de l'installation, un court-métrage mêlant acteurs réels et scènes 3D numériques plonge virtuellement le spectateur dans l'antre nocturne de ce paquebot étrange et menaçant.

Sea of Tranquillity est une coproduction d'Argos, Centre for Art & Media, Le Grand Café (Saint-Nazaire, France), Kunstmuseum Thun (Suisse) et CAB (Burgos, Espagne).



(1)

(EN) The work of Hans Op de Beeck (1969) includes sculptures, installations, videos, animated films, photography, drawings, paintings, music, sound and words. His work is a reflection on the human condition; our difficult relationship with time, space and each other in a contemporary environment. The result is undeniably fictional, constructed and staged: it is up to the viewer to accept the image as a sort of parallel reality, or to put it into perspective as no more than a visual construction.

During a short residence at Saint-Nazaire in France in 2008, the artist became intrigued by the remarkable Second World War story and post-war reconstruction of this harbour town, whose shipyards produce the world's largest cruise liners. It seemed to Op de Beeck that the Queen Mary 2, then just completed, was, like the Burj Khalifa in Dubai (the highest building in the world), a suitable metaphor for our belief in spurious values and in such concepts as work, leisure time and luxury consumerism. We nowadays use such categories as 'the highest', 'the first' and 'the biggest', but what do these terms say about the actual quality of things?

The exhibition is conceived as an all-embracing installation; an evocation of a small, historical-looking museum which we seem to be entering after closing time and which appears to be devoted to a (fictional) mythical cruise liner, the *Sea of Tranquillity*. The spatial installation does not provide any explanation in words, only images: a sizeable scale model of the ship, sculptures of the captain and a maid, large display cases, an evocation of a sleeping container site at night and a series of black and white watercolours. The main focus is a medium-length film, a combination of acting and digitally generated 3D environments in which the viewer makes a night-time visit to the mysterious ship.

Sea of Tranquillity is a coproduction by Argos Centre for Art & Media, Le Grand Café (Saint-Nazaire, France), Kunstmuseum Thun (Switzerland) and CAB (Burgos, Spain).



OPENING NIGHT

22.01.2011 18.00–21.00

(1) Hans Op de Beeck, *Sea of Tranquillity*, 2010, installation view

CELEBRATING EMPTINESS

Interview with Hans Op de Beeck
by Emmanuelle Lequeux

(EN) *Sea of Tranquillity* is a typical Hans Op de Beeck project: the exhibition is conceived as one large installation, a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, where the senses are stimulated through the use of various media and different scales. The silence, the mysterious nocturnal mood and the subdued, underlying reflection on how we deal with time, space and each other nowadays, are recurring subjects throughout Op de Beeck's work. Emmanuelle Lequeux had a discussion with Hans Op de Beeck about *Sea of Tranquillity*, the meaning of scale in his body of work and his position as an artist.



(1)

Emmanuelle Lequeux: As an artist you seem to employ almost every available medium (e.g. videos, installations, sculptures, photos, drawings, paintings, sound and music). A lot of your work is presented in an exhibition context, or in a strong relationship to other works. Can the separate works be considered independently?
Hans Op de Beeck: "Oh yes, my works are independent pieces as well. However, during their conception, development and, later on, their first public confrontation with an audience, I like to create and show them as a valid whole,

presenting them as a body of work with a focus on a specific exhibition subject or an overall mood. Later on, though, the works live their own lives; for example, my most recent video, *Sea of Tranquillity* (2010), was initially part of a solo exhibition, but will be shown autonomously in the film-theatre context and at group exhibitions with other artists. In fact, when conceiving my work, I am not a medium-focused artist, but rather a subject-focused one. For me, a medium is an available tool to construct an image. I won't turn the medium itself into a subject, as some of my modernist colleagues did and do; that's another research track. Usually, I start with a mental image and then look for a way to visualize that in an adequate way, mostly ending up using a variety of media and consequently stimulating the different senses."

EL: Your work could be labelled as figurative. That description aside, please explain your approach to the narrative.

HODB: "As is the case in my other work, in my films I try to summon up a given, rather-hard-to-pin-down mood, rather than tell a streamlined story. This is definitely the case in my evocative film *Sea of Tranquillity*, and it is even true in my earlier film *My Brother's Gardens* (2003), which has an explicit narrative structure. I want to make films that you can look at for two seconds and somehow understand what they are about, but also that you can look at for a longer time and dig deeper and discover details. I think a video should be an open invitation that exerts as little pressure or irritation on the viewer as possible. It's like my life-size installations: you can walk straight through them or consider yourself welcome to spend a lot of time in them. Both experiences are very different, but equally legitimate. It's

important that this decision is left up to the viewer. It's like timelessness in a painting: a fixed image that doesn't force itself on you and that lets you decide for yourself how long you want to stay mentally in that fictive world. I love that moment when, by visualizing things in a certain way, you can make a construction, a representation, tip over into something authentic. Once, when asked to make an artist statement, I said that I believed in 'the authenticity of fake'. It's like the theatre: one



(2)

moment you're just seeing a few mediocre actors on what is clearly a stage, and the next the actors become believable characters and you stop thinking about the artificial context, the absence of the fourth wall, the red velvet theatre seats you're sitting on. The whole thing all of a sudden takes on something authentic and experiential."

EL: What's the meaning of the manipulation of scale throughout your work? And, in the case of your small models, are they mock-ups for larger installations?

HODB: "No, mostly they are not, although some are preparatory models, part of the creation and research process. There is no real logic or hierarchy in the use of different scales in my artistic output. Depending on what the work demands, things can turn out to be life-size, on a reduced scale or produced in magnified proportions. So, for example, a model on a reduced scale is not necessarily a mock-up for a life-size installation. I am interested in using different scales and media to question the visual perception of the viewer and to strengthen the tactility of the images – in sculpture, in 'flat' imagery, in three dimensions, in sound.... Generally, I don't produce or evolve in a linear way, say, from small to big, from sketch to execution. In my sculptural research, since around 2004, I moved from fictive worlds built to scale to life-size environments, simply as an exploration in making the work more physical, more experience-oriented. In these works, the viewer is invited to literally enter the installations. I want to offer both the illusion and the failure of the illusion in these works on a one-to-one scale. To achieve that, I consider it important to reduce information to the essence of a shape. The architectural

part of *Location (5)* (2004), for example – a 300m² walk-in installation of a motorway restaurant with a view of a nocturnal landscape – is completed in monochrome black. The only other colour in the entire installation is the orange of the streetlights on the motorway. With my assistants, I designed and made everything by hand, so without using ready-made architectural parts, furniture or street lights. My decision to do that was a nod to the fact that my work is a sculptural configuration of elements and not a literal simulation of a reality; it remains, undeniably, an interpretation, a translation, a re-creation on the basis of memory and imagination. The large-scale or life-size dimensions allow the work to be presented on a sensory scale: people go in and look at the 'nothing' and 'nowhere' of that deserted highway at night, for example, or find themselves surrounded by an entirely white, infinite panorama of a snowy landscape (*Location (6)*, 2008, EL). The result is a kind of 'fabrication' of an experience."

EL: When you first visited Saint-Nazaire, you were touched by the story of the city and the activities of its industrial harbour. In what way did this influence your exhibition?

HODB: "It had a very strong impact on the conception of the show. During my stay in Saint-Nazaire, almost three years ago now, I was inspired by the unique and remarkable historical developments of the city and, yes, by its harbour, particularly the shipyard, which constructs megalomaniac cruise ships. The development of this city throughout history has been somewhat schizophrenic. Its major historic monument, the colossal WWII submarine base created by Nazi Germany, lies on the coast of the completely rebuilt city – an inert, silent witness. Post-war redevelopment has meant that Saint-Nazaire has not grown gradually and organically, but instead has had a disjointed, rational and inflexible grid of streets imposed upon it. The cruise ships, the super-size monuments that are constructed there nowadays, do not remain in Saint-Nazaire, but leave the city. Projects that have been worked upon with such energy and effort soon sail away over the water. The construction of the cruise ships, including the Queen Mary 2, then the largest cruise ship ever, was accompanied by problems caused by the economic reality of short-term work contracts. The complex network of subcontractors and migrant workers has often led to serious conflicts with small businesses and workers, who are often paid too little, too late or not at all, and have to contend with harsh terms of employment or work in difficult conditions. Despite the current worldwide economic slump, there is still an incredible demand for such mega-sized luxury ships. On top of all this, there's a kind of ongoing competition between the ship-building companies to produce the largest liner to date."

(1) Hans Op de Beeck, *Sea of Tranquillity*, 2010, installation view

(2) Hans Op de Beeck, *Shipyard (sleeping containers)*, 2010, Sculpture on base (wood, paint, glue paste, plastics, metal, light system), 135 x 400 x 140 (h) cm, Courtesy Galleria Continua, San Gimignano - Beijing - Le Moulin



(1)

EL: You use these ships as a metaphor for the way in which we deal with our lives. What do you mean exactly?

HODb: "These mega ocean liners, as with huge shopping malls, are archetypes of the modern luxury leisure market, which may be viewed as symptomatic of prevailing Western attitudes to the concepts of spare time, work and consumption. People who sign up for a cruise of several weeks from, say, Europe to the States, can while away their time experiencing the ultimate in consumption in a completely tame and risk-free floating land of plenty. The staggering size of such a ship, with over a thousand crew members, means that thousands of passengers are let loose around the clock upon casinos, cinemas, swimming pools, spas, temples to cosmetics, clothes stores, luxury shops and other facilities. The cruise ship is an enormous floating shopping and leisure mall, a gated community, that seems far removed from what travel should be all about: being mentally in transit and experiencing the natural environment. The many-themed interiors on the ship resemble the post-modern pseudo-chic of hotel chains and malls that all look the same no matter where in the world they are. Cruise passengers on an ocean liner (the largest type) spend weeks in an atmosphere of style-free decorum that is devoid of any form of authenticity, just part of the faceless no-man's-land that is spreading its way around the world. What is the appeal of a mass cruise that, by current travel standards, is so agonizingly slow? Is it a touch of nostalgia for the old super-size ships of days gone by and the sophisticated character of transatlantic cruises, which used to be prohibitively expensive?"

EL: Do you think that cruise liners in general have something mythical about them?

HODb: "That's what people like to believe and what they tend to project on to these ships. The fact that the Queen Mary 2, even before entering into service, was already being touted as a 'legend', says it all. Only with time, probably decades, can things prove themselves to be legends. It is, of course, rather peculiar for something with no history to be instantly referred to as a legend. Perhaps the ship was given this premature label because it was the largest passenger ship ever built at that time. However, categories such as 'the biggest', 'the tallest' or 'the heaviest' are superficial and tacky. They say nothing about the quality of the object. Yet, we have a passionate desire for such larger-than-life objects, because they appeal to our imagination and create myths, so transcending the mundane. At the same time, they also serve as evidence of the crushing insignificance of the individual. This lends such objects a certain ambiguity: they demonstrate what humans are capable of, while at the same time illustrating the triviality of a human life. Furthermore, these large cruise ships have no ethical concerns. They celebrate emptiness. A lot of people say they want to go on a cruise at least once in their lifetime. The cruise, in spite of its modern, predictable form, still retains a touch of 'adventure'. However, it is hard to condemn the cruise ship as such. By the way, there is actually nothing wrong with the idea of occasionally allowing some superficial pleasure to colour the short life we are allotted. Too much seriousness can, of course, be deadly. But superficial pleasure also has its drawbacks. Every illusion demands sacrifices."



(2) leather benches, a film projection and freestanding spatial (re-) constructions relating a coherent story about a historical subject. My presentation does indeed allude to a didactic display, but it is not one: I avoid all forms of textual explanation and omit anecdotal aspects from the work, so as to keep the presentation evocative and allow for a range of interpretations."

(3)



EL: How did you come up with the title *Sea of Tranquillity* for your project in general, your fictional cruise liner, the jazz song you wrote and the film?

HODb: "The credit for the title goes to my writing friends Nicolas de Oliveira and Nicola Oxley who suggested it to me. I instantly loved the title because of its layered emotion and its analogy with the names of existing cruise ships. Literally translated into Dutch, sea of tranquillity is "zee van rust", which is a common saying to express a moment in which one experiences timelessness, calmness, peace and silence. Sea of tranquillity, in Latin "mare tranquillitatis", is also the name of a lunar mare that sits within the Tranquillitatis basin on the moon. The moon itself is an icon of melancholia. As such, Sea of Tranquillity has a complex, poetic charge, but also presents a touch of irony regarding the superficial, safe and unimaginative leisure opportunities that are on offer on board a ship."

EL: What made you conceive the show as a walk-through museum-like installation, not yet open or after closing time and full of silent melancholy?

HODb: "I liked the idea of presenting a show as a total environment, a film-set-like evocation of a dark museum, in reference to the mysterious and eclectic collections of objects in traditional, old-fashioned museums, with classic display cabinets,

EL: The *Sea of Tranquillity* ship, in the show presented as both a large-scale sculptural model and as the leading character in the movie, satisfies high technological standards and is fashioned on the nowadays so-called 'landmark' architecture style and lounge interior trends. However, the appearance of this deceitful museum in an 'after-closing-time' kind of setting, creates the impression that we are dealing with a mythic tale of days gone by.

HODb: "At odds with the conventional museum form of this show, is the urgent, current, but also universal content that I try to examine, a story about the problem of globalization and the belief in false values. By not giving the three-dimensional work in the exhibition a concrete interpretation, and by leaving the dark, mysterious Lynchian film without words, I invite the viewer to wander through a collection of nameless images, objects and impressions in a strange, fictitious museum that is dedicated to an equally fictitious 'legend'."

EL: Your works seem to be full of melancholy. It reminds me of a writer like Samuel Beckett, who also evokes a kind of desperate end-of-the-world mood. Do you consider art as a temptation to escape reality, or rather to unveil its deeper levels?

HODb: "I am not too fond of escapism or fantasy or sci-fi genres. I like to talk about life as we experience it here and now, in all

- (1) Hans Op de Beeck, *Sea of Tranquillity (model)*, 2010, Sculpture on base (Plexiglass, textile, resin, arcap, glass, PU, light system, wood, paint), 500 x 200 x 180 (h) cm, Courtesy Xavier Hufkens, Brussels – Realised with the collaboration of Le Grand Café, Saint-Nazaire
- (2) Hans Op de Beeck, *Dancer*, 2010, Aquarelle on Arches paper in wooden frame, 249 x 133,9 x 4,35 cm (landscape), Courtesy Xavier Hufkens, Brussels
- (3) Hans Op de Beeck, *Captain*, 2010, Sculpture on base (polyester, textile, silicone, wood, paint), approx 100 x 100 x 220 (h) cm, Courtesy Galleria Continua, San Gimignano - Beijing - Le Moulin

its contradictory complexities, and with all its references to the past and to universally recognizable subjects. So, I'd rather say I try to unveil aspects of what we call reality. Therefore, for example, the *Sea of Tranquillity* movie doesn't employ science-fiction aesthetics: such a ship could actually exist today. That's really important to me. And it might surprise you, but I am not at all into an end-of-the-world way of thinking. I am not a fatalist. Rather, I see my work as a way of dealing with the melancholy – not to be confused with fatalism – and the tragicomic absurdity that are so much part of our human existence. My works are constructions for reflection; I always want my viewers to be able to fall back on the realization that 'it's only a mock-up', a construction that allows you to step back and relativize our lives here on earth. By the way, in my oeuvre you can also discover quite a lot of colourful, playful and humorous works. I think that absurdity, a typical Beckettian notion, isn't something negative or positive. As a concept, a point of view, it allows you to see cruel beauty in things. And it also provides a healthy distance, comfort and consolation. But, I must admit, I do like the tragic as a tool as well. As we know, a novel in which everything's just fine and everyone is happy, just isn't worth reading. Only when intrigue, conflict and problems enter the

story does it become interesting and – looking back on it – ennobling to the reader. Compare it to the cruelties of the Greek tragedies, where the audience can identify with the protagonists who are mercilessly struck by fate, and which still leave the viewer feeling calm and dignified afterwards; the old catharsis idea."

EL: Your work is often silent; words disappear. How would you define your relationship to language?

HODB: "I am two hundred per cent a visual artist, thoroughly enjoying the advantage of showing things in silence, operating between the lines of visual information, without having to name things literally, without having to tame them into words. Silent visual works, at their best, invite introspection, offer the viewer consolation and a sense of peacefulness, despite the fact that the contents can be cruel or dramatic. Silent works can be emotionally more overwhelming than flashy, loud and noisy ones.

Nevertheless, I am very interested in language as a tool and am a keen reader of fiction. I do write myself: short stories and column-like reflections, though my writing output is very modest; it's such a hard job. The format of the short story suits me well, since its production length is similar to that of developing a visual piece. For these writings, I've been happy to solely make use of language, without feeling any need whatsoever to additionally illustrate them. Language is such a visual tool all by itself: images created in the reader's mind are incredibly powerful.

But I will never stop producing the wordless images that so strongly refer to my artistic roots: the silence of a painting."

After studying art history, literature and journalism, **EMMANUELLE LEQUEUX** has been working as an art critic and journalist since 1997. She collaborated for *Aden*, the cultural supplement for the newspaper *Le Monde*, and publishes regularly in *Flash Art*.

ARGOS CENTRE FOR ART AND MEDIA ARGOSMAGAZINE N°01 JAN - MAR 2011



(1)

- (1) Hans Op de Beeck, *Chambermaid*, 2010, Sculpture on base (polyester, textile, silicone, wood, paint), 100 x 100 x 200 (h) cm, Courtesy Galleria Continua, San Gimignano - Beijing - Le Moulin and Xavier Hufkens, Brussels
- (2) Hans Op de Beeck, *Sea of Tranquillity*, 2010, Full HD video, 29 minutes, 40 seconds, colour, sound, Courtesy Galleria Continua, San Gimignano - Beijing - Le Moulin; Xavier Hufkens, Brussels; Galerie Ron Mandos, Rotterdam – Amsterdam, Coproduced by the National Centre for Visual Arts - Ministry of Culture and Communication (F), the Flanders Audiovisual Fund (B), Emmanuelle and Michael Guttman and Le Fresnoy - Studio National des Arts Contemporains



(2)





ARGOS CENTRE FOR ART AND MEDIA ARGOSMAGAZINE N°01 JAN - MAR 2011

SHELLY SILVER

HERE, HIS

這裡, 他的

25.01–02.04.2011

Ⓜ L'oeuvre de Shelly Silver (1957) rapproche les territoires contestés entre public et privé, entre récit et documentaire et, sans cesse davantage au cours des dernières années, entre l'observateur et l'observé. Sa nouvelle installation *here, his* 這裡, 他的 se concentre sur le lieu où elle réside depuis 24 ans maintenant : Chinatown, NYC, un petit quartier insulaire qui porte les traces et se ressent des coups de boutoir de l'histoire – guerres, révolutions, traités entre nations, marchands de sommeil, discrimination.

Son protagoniste-et-comparses fictionnel est un homme revenu récemment à Chinatown, un endroit qu'il a quitté dès qu'il a pu et où il y est retourné pour s'occuper de sa mère malade. L'homme est un cinéaste et pendant qu'il attend cette fin inéluctable, il occupe son temps – cette béance impossible qui consiste à attendre la mort de quelqu'un – en observant, en filmant.

L'observation est pour cet homme un passe-temps étonnamment actif. A mesure qu'il observe, il se souvient et reconstruit en la permutant, en la reséquençant, une histoire par laquelle il s'est senti lésé, un monde dont il s'est senti mis à l'écart. L'attente modèle et déforme le temps. Elle ouvre la vision sur certaines choses – des choses impossibles.

Nous entrons dans l'intimité de l'homme, ou c'est du moins ce qu'il souhaite : nous séduire, nous amener vers lui. Nous allons attendre avec lui. Il se sert du « présent » de ses images pour manipuler le passé et l'avenir. L'histoire et le temps, il ne doit pas seulement les changer pour lui, mais pour nous. Il est lui-même une ruse, un artifice (c'est lui qui nous l'affirme). Une ruse, un artifice pour nous garder ici près de lui, à observer. A observer ce qu'il observe.

« *My eye in your eye. My tongue in your mouth.* »
[« Mon œil se glisse dans le vôtre. Ma langue se glisse dans votre bouche. »]

Silver construit une salle d'attente abstraite qui englobe l'espace tant intérieur qu'extérieur. Le film s'envisage et se donne comme un phénomène spatial, qui invite – ou contraint – le spectateur d'entrer dans une approximation de son propre espace. Le spectateur navigue dans les minutes, les heures, les saisons et le lieu de l'attente de l'homme, incarnant sa relation à la mort, au désir, à l'histoire, au voyeurisme, au pouvoir, au plaisir et à la vie.

(NL) Het werk van Shelly Silver (1957) overbrugt de omstreden gebieden tussen publiek en privé, vertelling en documentaire en – steeds vaker de laatste jaren – de kijker en wat bekeken wordt. Haar nieuwe installatie *here, his* 這裡, 他的 focust op de plek waar de kunstenaar nu sinds 24 jaar woont, Chinatown in New York City. De kleine wijk draagt de sporen van de geschiedenis: oorlogen, revoluties, verdragen tussen naties, huisjesmelkers en discriminatie.

In dit project is haar fictionele protagonist/ kompaan een man die onlangs naar Chinatown terugkeerde om voor zijn zieke moeder te zorgen. Zelf een filmmaker zijnde, wacht hij op het onafwendbare. Daartoe vult hij zijn tijd – die onmogelijke leegte waarin het wachten op iemands dood bestaat – met kijken en filmen.

Kijken is voor hem een verrassend actieve bezigheid. Al kijkend borrelen de herinneringen op en reconstrueert hij het verleden, wat hem toestaat een geschiedenis te herschikken waardoor hij zich tekortgedaan voelt, uitgesloten ook. Het wachten vormt en vervormt de tijd. Bijgevolg wordt het mogelijk dingen te zien – onmogelijke dingen.

Wij worden meer vertrouwd met de man, komen dichterbij hem, voelen ons met hem verwant – of dat is tenminste wat hij zou willen. Hij wil ons verleiden, ons naar hem toe trekken, ons strikken. We wachten samen met hem. Hij gebruikt het 'heden' van zijn beelden om het verleden en de toekomst te manipuleren. Hij moet manipuleren, draaien, verdraaien – niet alleen voor zichzelf maar ook voor ons. Hij bedriegt ons – dat zegt hij zelf – om bij hem te blijven, kijkend naar wat hij kijkt.

“My eye in your eye. My tongue in your mouth.”

Silver construeert een abstracte wachtzaal, die zowel de uiterlijke als de innerlijke ruimte omsluit. De film is dus ruimtelijk opgevat, nodigt de kijker uit – of gebiedt hem – een benadering van zijn eigen ruimte te betreden. De kijker navigeert in de minuten, uren, seizoenen en de plaats waar deze man wacht. Hij belichaamt zijn verhouding met de dood, begeerte, geschiedenis, voyeurisme, macht, plezier en met het leven.



(EN) The work of Shelly Silver (1957) bridges the contested territories between public and private, narrative and documentary, and increasingly in recent years, the watcher and the watched. For her new installation *here, his* 這裡, 他的 she centres on the place where she's been living for the last 24 years, Chinatown, NYC, a small insular neighbourhood slapped by history – wars, revolutions, pacts between nations, slumlords, discrimination.

Her fictional protagonist/ cohort in this enterprise is a man who has recently returned to Chinatown, a place that he fled from as soon as he possibly could, to take care of his ailing mother. The man is a filmmaker, and as he waits for the inevitable, he fills this time, the impossible void of waiting for someone to die, with watching, with filming.

Watching, for him, is a surprisingly active pursuit. As he watches he remembers and rebuilds, permutating a history he felt damaged by, a world he felt pushed from. Waiting shapes and twists time. It is possible to see things – impossible things.

We become intimate with this man, or at least that is what he wants. To seduce – to draw us near. We will wait with him. He uses 'the present' of his images to manipulate past and future. He must not only change it for himself, he must change it for us. He is a ruse (he tells us so). A ruse to keep us here with him, watching. Watching what he watches.

“My eye in your eye. My tongue in your mouth.”

Silver constructs an abstract waiting room, encompassing both external and internal space. The film is envisioned spatially, inviting/ coercing the viewer to enter into an approximation of his space. The viewer navigates in the minutes, hours, seasons and place of this man's waiting, embodying his relationship to death, desire, history, voyeurism, power, pleasure and life.



OPENING NIGHT

22.01.2011 18.00-21.00

ARGOS CENTRE FOR ART AND MEDIA ARGOSMAGAZINE N°01 JAN - MAR 2011

THE TIME OF US



Essay on Shelly Silver's *here, his* 這裡, 他的 by Nicole Wolf

INHABITATION AS DOCUMENTARY PRACTICE IN SHELLY SILVER'S *HERE, HIS*

Large red roses on beige background
Tiger skin pattern
White peonies and lilies and coconut palm trees on pale pink
Beige ornaments on red
White stripes on blue
Meadow flowers in pink, blue, yellow, orange on off white
Plain red
White sheep, small hearts in light rose
Two elegant ladies in purple dresses, one with a feathery stole, both with hand bags, lipstick, and eye catching red hats adorned with more feathers and flowers, framed by more red hats on purple, white fluffy cat with red crown, purple tea pot with red lid
White duvet, now without linen
Trolley filled with belongings underneath

Exercise: Look for what is most regular and the difference in that regularity.¹

活動: 尋找最固定的和規律中的差別。

here, his is a committed exercise in looking. It is an exercise translated into a poetic fictional story, which takes its viewers on an exploration. An exploration of looking's latent potential for the expansion of time to encounter a space, for the making of worlds and being part of the singular and collective worlds we create and importantly, for the reclamation of ownership through our looks. *here, his* probes that by looking, and filming, we cannot other than take, freeze and spy, but it proposes that it might be worth our time to indulge in looking around us so that we may relate and participate. *We must look.*





here, his, the multi-screen installation, framed as a waiting room, asks for our time and challenges the passivity associated with waiting as a stage of delay. Rather, it is a place for concentration and for time taking place. It is a waiting room to host the countless stories that we pass by often; the story behind the lit up window, the child glaring into the void, the face on the immigration card, the man selling umbrellas on the sidewalk, the demolition site, the women in the laundromat, the family in the found photograph, or indeed the stories of a man called Michael who covers his loaded trolley with the purple-lady-patterned linen, or a duvet without linen - we will encounter him repeatedly and he will be the only one given a name. A waiting room for you and me and all of them, and for what is between us. *We must wait.*

Shelly Silver 'walks the camera' in her neighbourhood, Chinatown in Manhattan. She takes the camera for a stroll, at different times of the day, through different seasons, incessantly re-engaging with Chinatown's public sphere and the habitual agility of its street corners, its shop window displays, its overt and less overt signs of life, its residents and their possible entanglements with Chinatown's histories and futures, wars and celebrations, precarious labour conditions and rising real estate prices, immigration restrictions and economic strongholds. Among those there is one particular voice that Shelly Silver has selected to be our guide. He is determined to take his time. Let's start again.

"Open your eyes."
睜開你的眼睛

He introduces himself as an older Chinese man and he speaks in Mandarin. His voice is a settled gentle one. He teases us, flirts with us, and we with him. He shares intimate and urgent secrets with us. We learn that he is someone who escaped from his family but has now decided to come back, someone who never felt welcome and now enters anyway, someone who felt despised and now tries to reconcile, someone coming face to face with aging and mortality; his own and his ailing mother's. His visual opacity brings him even closer to us as we listen to him. We never learn his name but we are in his mind and we look with him. His words, supported through Chinese and English subtitles, carefully correspond to the immediacy of the moment of watching. For some of us who do not understand him without reading subtitles, the seductive sound of his voice creates a particular resonance and a sonic continuity throughout the space of *here, his*. While we wander and pause within the installation, we will most likely always hear his voice next to the soundscapes of Chinatown and gradually associate his voice with this urban space. While our field of vision



remains within Chinatown's public sphere, we listen in on his private space. He shares with us his stream of memories and thoughts, while he indulges in exploring Chinatown's fragments, textures, matter, traces left and missing, through his own camera. There are traces of dog paws in the grey asphalt of the pavement but not of the old man who jumped from the 5th floor of the building on Henry Street, Chinatown.

People get tired of living.
人們厭倦了生活

APPROXIMATIONS

Our protagonist re-traces minor and larger histories criss-crossing in a neighbourhood, and a community, which was, and maybe still is, too narrow and too claustrophobic for him to belong, by way of his language (neither English nor Cantonese), his sexuality, his being and choosing otherwise. Yet he chooses to follow the call of his mother who never accepted him. Coming back is a challenge and an opportunity for him, for us. He is seeking a way in.

The snow comes as a surprise. The residents are wearing thick coats and protect themselves with warm woollen caps. Boys are playing with snowballs. We glare at the density of the snowflakes. We can hear its light landing on the roof and we can feel the chill.

I've come home to take care of you. To see you through this final illness to the other side.
我回家来照顾你。陪你走完这疾病的最后一段旅程直至你到达黄泉的另一边

Prompted by old photographs, he tells us of his negotiations with a neighbourhood he had left long ago and of which he never felt a part. The kinds of images available to weave himself into an all too easily forgotten history, are frontal and representational black and white portraits, of individuals and families. Those kinds of records of faces, those images as documents and evidence, for citizenship, for community or family membership, seem initially to stand in contrast to his



own search for a different kind of acknowledgement of people and matter passing by, yet they are what remains and they now offer a path for reconstructing and making worlds anew. Surely he himself will never be a candidate for a *Who's Who of the Chinese in New York*, a book published in 1918, which proudly presents men in suits, with ties and shiny combed hair. How will his image remain?

He invests himself and his desires in selected photographs. He approaches them step-by-step, considering fragments first and only then the image as a whole, unleashing their probable and improbable stories. They are supposedly objects of the past but he treats them as utterly important for thinking the now, for by recasting history we can alter the future. He deals with them tenderly, devoting time to people's location, to the sadness of their looks and to what they might have missed in their lives still in front of them when posing for the photograph. He expands his fabrications and desires generously towards others, endowing the girl in traditional Chinese dress, standing on a roof in New York in 1902, with abundant possibilities for her future career.



Improbability is probability's nemesis and secret lover. Mine too.
不可能性是可能性的仇敌和秘密的恋人

Him losing his mother's picture and having to replace it with someone else's, is loaded with emotions of attachment and anger towards she who rejected him. But, it also reveals our longing for images that remain and the felt duty to take care of those we were able to collect. We learn that our protagonist's mother journeyed from Peking to New York, at a time of still strict ethnicity specific immigration laws. We sense her son's admiration of her adventurous life as an immigrant woman and garment worker. Could her life have taken another shape had she not been a woman, had she been born or migrated into a more welcoming world? What remains of a struggle when someone dies? Not even an image? We might be reminded of her when we see elderly Chinese women self evidently inhabiting the public spaces of Chinatown on a sunny afternoon, playing cards, chatting and laughing. Who is protecting their image and place in history?



His favourite photograph is one of a family. It is a peculiarly ambivalent family photograph though. First we see hands, hands holding, hands and arms gently placed on top of each other, a thread made of holding. Once we are given access to the complete image, we see a couple sitting in the middle of a family portrait surrounded by a simple ornamental backdrop likely to be provided in a photo studio. The parents are surrounded by children of different ages, some of those possibly grand children. Most of the children smile at the photographer, they must have been instructed to do so. The adults are more hesitant, their minds seem somewhere else. Most apparently, we see that faces had been cut out and are now arranged again, making the photograph into a collage. Her head and the collars of her flowery dress remain awkwardly put together. Together and apart, a collage of a family, an incomplete union? Many questions arise as there is no evidence detailing the events that led to the need for the extremity of this collage. Did they have to depart? Did they know what would be their futures? He might be in this picture, still accepted as the innocent little boy.

No one leaves their country for no reason.
没有人无由地离开他们的国家。

A lot rests on our protagonist's tenuous *being with* this photograph. Through puzzling together a family photograph he might rehearse possibilities of what it could mean to be part of a family, at a time when he returns to his city and to a mother who rejected him and who now needs his care. Throughout *here, his* fundamental questions are posed through the handling of image making: How to carry out one's being in the world? How to exist together in making precious worlds? *We must take part. We must desire.*

The sheer desire to be together.
纯粹的渴望为要在一起



WHAT DOES THE PORCELAIN CAT WHISPER?

Raindrops on a textured windowsill
Feet in flip flops appearing out from under a roof
Slow movement of curtain fringes
One half of a white porcelain cat, witty expression, at the edge of the frame
Light bulb under door frame
Fragment of a wall with paper notes, paper snippets with telephone numbers
The gasping mouth of an almost dead fish
Eyes excised from a photograph
Face of a man half visible from behind a wall
Head of patient white man with funny hat, gravel around his mouth, carved into the façade of a house
Installation in front of a Chinese supermarket, cardboard boxes and wooden crates carefully piled up

Our protagonist approaches the neighbourhood of his childhood and experiments with ways of being in the midst of it. He might imagine at which street corner he would stand now had he never left.

He engages with the matter of the city to take account of himself. His scrutiny can thus not be for the aim of authentic description or capturing but for taking account of his possible relation to it. He wonders why he was never before aware of those peculiar minutiae and so he studies their very details. His clear choices for framing and thus creating quite particular images of this space, privilege the possibilities that lie dormant in the mere texture and materiality of what surrounds him, and now us as viewers. A fragment like the left corner of a door frame is often not linked to the entire object or only once we have engaged with it otherwise, as detail and fragment. There are only a few moments where we follow the process of a zoom and if so, it is a zooming out rather than in, from close to further away. From close, maybe too close, to taking one's space. It is not a look seeking transparency but one filled with desire to relate.

An affinity, an energy. A camera is a device for the accumulation of this energy.
一親和力, 能量。我的相機是一個積累能量的設備。

The look that he shares with us could also be described as directed from a position within, from someone standing on the side of the road, watching people

waiting for the bus, briefly following a child curious about the camera, a cat roaming her territory, or a plastic yellow monkey king hanging outside a shop. He seems to communicate with people and things in a similar manner, they are often at his height and they are shown to us as equal to each other. If the world is indeed radiating energy then clearly our protagonist is seeking to connect with it through his gaze. His desire for connection is hereby not predetermined but his longing to exist in-relation unfolds without hierarchy.

In Walter Benjamin's sincere interrogation of the 'language of things' he asks, "To whom does the lamp communicate itself?". He does not speak in symbols or recount a fable but he asks us to account for the very materiality of the lamp. He claims for the lamp to exist as "language lamp, the lamp in communication, the lamp in expression".² While Benjamin continues to query how man communicates himself through naming things, our protagonist gives expression to things, and to himself, by seeking the very materiality of the lamp, its being not through but in texture. *here, his* hereby seduces us as viewers to relate to, and communicate with, the many qualities of matter that comprise an urban space as they speak of its experiences of perpetual decay and renewal, and thus of forced evacuations, gentrification, hierarchies of space and access. The pleasure and pain of living and sensing organisms undergoing change.

While, and if, we trustingly concentrate on this exploration, we as viewers of his images, also must listen carefully, for our narrator vigilantly chooses a way of telling. By looking, listening, and reading - the narrator's voice is translated and presented to us as subtitles in English and Chinese - we notice that there are gaps in the voice as he leaves us to read in silence. We might then listen to the sound of the city, left to our own devices and our own time. But soon he addresses us again, clearly and vehemently, through bold statements of enlarged white Chinese letters on black. His voice, the narration shown as text, simultaneously in English and Chinese, might of course be a practical necessity for addressing the multiple viewers, but the slight rupture and thus incongruousness makes us aware that they are not mere translations of each other, not mere translations from Chinese into English, from voice into text, but singular translations between matter, looking and language. Different ways of relating to this particular neighbourhood, to the energy latently present in the material studied, to which we might want to add our own.

Together with our narrator's relentless look, this subtle displacement of listening and looking makes us aware of our bodies' various abilities to relate and be affected. Our sensual registers are addressed through



varied tones. We are confronted with the fragility and momentary quality of our encounters with him and with what he shows us. We become interpellated in the secrets of this aging gay man; at times we become his secret lover. We are complicit in the complex exchange of looks and complicit in the shifting constellations of watching and being watched, telling and listening in. *We must listen.*

The delicious possibility (not yet a reality) of commingling with the outside.
与外面世界交融, 虽不现实, 但其可能性是那样诱人。

RECLAMATIONS

Our protagonist has not been the only one with a camera in this neighbourhood. Residents perform for the recording of Chinese cultural events. Film crews come in for a day and block a street corner with cumbersome equipment. The previously mentioned expansion of space through our watching seems to suddenly shrink as it becomes a mere backdrop and décor in a film set, a stage for someone's fantasy, desire and economic power. Chinatown ages; Chinatown hosts a familiar and harsh struggle over real estate speculation, housing markets, spaces for living and commingling.

Confucius once said: A phenomenon is recognized at the moment of its extinction.

When a neighborhood becomes a film set it is poised to disappear.

孔子曾经说过: 一种现象只有到了它消失的时候才被人认识。
当一个邻里成为电影拍摄场地, 它就要消失了。

We as participating viewers understand now that by addressing ambiguities towards his mother and his old neighbourhood our protagonist exercises a challenge, which has much wider reverberations than his own personal story. By probing his own position vis-à-vis his mother, a community and a neighbourhood and by looking closely, he opens it out to itself, he opens out Chinatown's very own vulnerability to itself, vulnerabilities through histories and present tense of struggles over space, power and ownership, creating signs of life and death, energy and fatigue. He seems to probe our relations to those urgencies as well.

Without easy and morally charged conclusions *here, his* puts forward webs of constellations, which address the often grotesque incongruousness of inhabiting and owning. It does so by exercising the expansive and relational look described. What is thus proposed is inhabitation as a documentary practice. The inhabitation of a place through slowly watching, by taking one's time, develops into a conceptual, forceful



and necessary filming practice, which continues to desire relations with the energetic excess of places and their material. A way of being by looking which recognises the care and ownership present in the different patterns and textures of the linen with which the man called Michael covers his street cart. *We must remember him.*

One aim of our endeavouring looks might thus be to hear a place talking back, to listen to how movement is happening within it, how we can take account of it and enhance it if we dare to give it some time and attention. This careful yet decisive process of watching indulges in the game of pretending that we collectively own when we look, and that by owning and sharing we make public, we relate and we care. Capitalism hardly ever looks, it has no time for waiting, it does not see as it must appropriate, describe and re-present; it owns without inhabiting. *We must wait longer.*

Our narrator watches in order to recuperate not with a sense of nostalgia for something he was himself not part of, but with a quest for having a say in how the already no longer and the not yet might possibly become. If it is indeed feasible that in the sharing of our time and the exchange of our looks, in seeking energy, texture, sense and pleasure, there will be a multiplication of signs of life reclaiming their place – then this would make here, his a pleasurable and urgent political space. *We must reclaim.*

Afternoon, maybe

The rain has settled in

It brings with it a slight chill

Sweet Spring restaurant, Catherine Street, no 25

Name and phone number (766-1777) in coloured

neon lights

A few customers inside

Outside, in front of the large window

One man stands under the narrow roof

Another man, part of Woody Allen's film crew, is next to him

Both wait, look

One very gently pulls the other closer to him

Now both are protected from the rain



NICOLE WOLF lives in London and Berlin. Her research, writing, teaching and curatorial practice focuses on documentary practice and its multiple relations to political, artistic and cinematographic realms, with a particular interest in South-Asia. She teaches at Goldsmiths, University of London.

- (1) All direct quotations are part of the voice over narration of *here, his*.
- (2) Benjamin, Walter, 'On Language as such and on the language of man', in: *Selected Writings Volume I, 1913-1926*, Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, Harvard (eds.), University Press, 1996. P. 62-74. Cf. 63ff. See also: Steyerl, Hito 2008. *Die Farbe der Wahrheit*. Wien: Turia&Kant. By interrogating Walter Benjamin's 'language of things', Steyerl makes a brilliant argument for documentary images as non-presentational.

Feuilleton



Joan Jonas, *Songdelay*, 1973. Copyright the artist. Courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York.



Trisha Brown, *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building*, 1970. Courtesy of the artist.

BLACK BOX

DOWN LOW UP HIGH – PERFORMING THE VERNACULAR

25.01–02.04.2011

ARGOS CENTRE FOR ART AND MEDIA ARGOSMAGAZINE N°01 JAN - MAR 2011

Ⓜ Argos Black Box presents a series of performances and choreographies on video and film that explore notions of movement, space and time within the urban make shift environment of New York City during the early 1970s. The compiled works in *Down Low Up High* offer a visual and performative exploration of urban space as a physically charged field of investigation. The protagonists of these works – from the dancer to the performer, from the camera to the city, from the passerby to the sparse audience – physically appropriate the public terrain of their daily surroundings through their presence as well as actions. The decision to leave the artist studio and go out on the street stood for an emancipatory and political consciousness that informed artistic production at the time and reflected the city politics that allowed cultural producers to conquer public space. Despite the few who were there to see these actions at the time, these performances, videos and films by film makers and cinematographers such as

Babette Mangolte, Bob Parent, Robert Fiori and Bill Rowley are now part of a greater canon that defines the collective memory of New York City at the time. Manhattan was a field of experimentation, a over- as well as non-occupied space that could be reclaimed for the public desire to express everyday actions as well as democratic rights. *Down Low Up High* presents Trisha Brown's iconic choreographies from 1970 (*Leaning Duets* and *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building*), Joan Jonas' performative exploration of space, movement, and sound in her video *Songdelay*, Babette Mangolte's film *Calico Mingling* on a choreography by Lucinda Childs, Bob Parent's film *Transformations on a SoHo Street* with a performance by Ruth Heller Coron and Elaine Summer's *Two Girls Downtown Iowa*, were all four made in 1973, as well as James Nares minimalist and physically experimental video performance *Roof* from 1975.

Curated by Barbara Clausen.

(FR) Argos Black Box présente une série de performances et de chorégraphies à travers des vidéos et films qui explorent les notions de mouvement, d'espace et de temps dans l'environnement urbain bouillonnant de New York City du début des années 1970. Les œuvres réunies dans *Down Low Up High* nous offrent une exploration visuelle et performative de l'espace urbain en tant que terrain d'investigation fortement connoté. Les protagonistes de ces œuvres – du danseur au performeur, de la caméra à la ville, du passant à un public disparate – s'approprient physiquement, par leur simple présence et actions, le « terrain public » de leur environnement quotidien. La décision de quitter l'atelier pour aller dans la rue était un geste d'émancipation et de conscience politique qui à l'époque irriguait la production artistique, tout en étant le symptôme d'une politique urbaine qui laissait aux producteurs culturels le champ libre pour investir l'espace public. Malgré le faible nombre de personnes ayant assisté à ces actions au moment où elles ont eu lieu, les performances, vidéos et films réalisés par des vidéastes et cinéastes tels que Babette Mangolte, Bob Parent, Robert Fiori et Bill Rowley s'inscrivent aujourd'hui dans une œuvre de critère qui contribue à définir la mémoire collective de New York City de ces années. Manhattan était alors un champ d'expérimentation, un espace tantôt sur-occupé, sur-investi, tantôt lacunaire, délaissé, à réinvestir par un désir collectif d'expression d'actions quotidiennes tout autant que de droits démocratiques. *Down Low Up High - Performing the Vernacular* présente *Leaning Duets* et *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building*, deux chorégraphies iconiques réalisées en 1970 par Trisha Brown, l'exploration performative de l'espace, du mouvement et du son rapportée par Joan Jonas dans sa vidéo *Songdelay*, le film *Calico Mingling* de Babette Mangolte, sur une chorégraphie de Lucinda Childs, le film *Transformations on a SoHo Street* de Bob Parent, avec une performance de Ruth Heller Coron, ou encore les *Two Girls Downtown Iowa* d'Elaine Summer – ces quatre dernières œuvres datant toutes de 1973 – sans oublier *Roof*, une performance vidéo minimaliste et physico-expérimentale réalisée par James Nares en 1975.

commissaire d'exposition : Barbara Clausen



OPENING NIGHT

22.01.2011 18.00-21.00

(NL) Argos Black Box stelt een reeks op film en video geregistreerde performances en choreografieën voor waarin de begrippen beweging, ruimte en tijd worden onderzocht in het bewogen straatbeeld van New York City tijdens het begin van de jaren 1970. De gecompileerde werken in *Down Low Up High* bieden een visueel en performatief ontdekkingstraject waarbij de stedelijke ruimte wordt opgevat als een fysiek geladen onderzoeksveld. De protagonisten van deze werken – van danser tot performer, van camera tot stad, van voorbijgangers tot het schaarse publiek – nemen, door hun aanwezigheid en hun handelingen, fysiek bezit van de openbare ruimte. De beslissing om uit de studio te komen en de straat op te gaan ging uit van de emancipatiegedachte en het politieke bewustzijn die destijds de artistieke productie onderbouwden. Tegelijkertijd weerspiegelde dit een stadsbeleid dat aan culturele producenten de mogelijkheid bood de openbare ruimte 'in te nemen'. Ook al waren er indertijd weinig toeschouwers bij de acties die deze kunstenaars ondernamen, nu maken deze performances, video's en films van regisseurs en cineasten zoals Babette Mangolte, Bob Parent, Robert Fiori en Bill Rowley deel uit van een breder canon dat het collectieve geheugen van het New York City van die tijd bepaalt. Manhattan was een laboratorium met zowel overvolle ruimten als leegstand. Die leemtes konden worden gebruikt en 'bezet' voor het uitdrukken van zowel dagelijkse handelingen als democratische rechten. In *Down Low Up High* zien we Trisha Browns iconische choreografieën uit 1970 (*Leaning Duets* en *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building*), Joan Jonas' performatieve verkenning van ruimte, beweging en geluid in haar video *Songdelay* (1973), Babette Mangoltes film *Calico Mingling* (1973, met een choreografie van Lucinda Childs), Bob Parents film *Transformations on a SoHo Street* (1973), met een performance door Ruth Heller Coron, en Elaine Summers *Two Girls Downtown Iowa* (1973). Het programma sluit met James Nares' minimalistische en fysiek experimentele videoperformance *Roof* uit 1975.

Curator: Barbara Clausen

Lecture Barbara Clausen
on *Down Low Up High - Performing the Vernacular*
02.03.2011 – 19.00
Kaaistudio's / Gratis

PERFORMING NYC – THE PERMANENT REINVENTION OF URBAN LIFE

Barbara Clausen

(EN) Downtown Manhattan between the late 1960s and the early 1980s offered an immediate forum, that was able to carry out the visualization and enactment of artistic innovation as well as discontent with cultural traditions, city politics and capitalist economy. The decision to leave the artist studio and go out on the street stood for a contingent state of awareness that stood for a variety of practices, both critical of institutional politics as well as engaged in the idea of the multi-disciplinary. It was in this spirit that video and performance pioneer Joan Jonas famously described her decision to literally, give up sculpture as she “walked into space,”¹ embarking on a life-long journey that redefined our understanding of performance art as a trans-disciplinary medium. Public performances not only made the flow of urban life but also made non-occupied space visible. Art had the potential to claim and create an awareness of public space through interventionist actions. Jonas' task-oriented choreographies for vacant parking lots, rubble filled empty lots, piers and potholed streets in *Songdelay* are emblematic of the performance-based appropriation of desolate public spaces in the late 1960s and early 1970s. By creating a theatre of space, movement and sound through a series of non-narrative actions, Jonas acts out a highly original and enigmatic theatrical language of gesture and sound. The artist's signature props such as hoops, sticks and blocks of wood created unexpected rhythms

of space and scale, references to painting and audio delays. The audience was far away from the site as well as close by, constantly changing their position in relation to the action. Like few other works of the time, and partly due to its participation of downtown luminaries such as Gordon Matta Clark, *Songdelay* has become a time capsule of the art scene at the time.

New York City in the 1970s has been reproduced and constructed in cinema, performance, photography, film and theatre in countless ways. It was the city itself that became the most performed and reproduced stage for performance art and as an image that stood for the fleeting of the vernacular, an international export. Despite the few who were there to see these actions at the time, these performances, videos and films are now part of a greater canon that defines the collective memory of New York City. Despite its corrupt and desolate state, Manhattan at the time could be reclaimed for the public desire to express a variety of agencies, from everyday needs to democratic rights. Looking back, dance critic Wendy Perron, identifies the image of Trisha Brown's performance *Roof Piece* captured by Babette Mangolte in 1973, as one of the iconic images of those early years, revealing “a unique conception of the relationship of person to environment. Rooftops are like basements, or closets: they aren't meant to be seen. When they are deliberately shown to you, you get the feeling you are seeing the inner workings of something.”²



Trisha Brown, *Leaning Duets*, 1970.
Courtesy of the artist.

Brown's *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* and *Leaning Duets*, both performed in 1970, are emblematic of her later works and are a disconcerting mixture of real and unreal, ordinary and extraordinary public acts. Particular to Brown's public performances was, that the protagonists of these works - from the dancer to the performer, from the camera to the city, from the passerby to the sparse audience - physically appropriated the public terrain of their daily surroundings through their actions as well as their mere presence. *Leaning Duets* is about the body's relationship to physics, gravity and space as it is about movement and the collaborative balance that enables two people to negotiate a common path. Pairs of dancers were bracing their feet against each other, hands linked and grasped onto loops of rope, trying to lean as far apart as possible while staying connected at their feet. The idea was to remain upright and cantilevered away from the partner. The instructions did not allow the partners to lean against one another, and when one partner fell, the other was only allowed to give help by tugging at their mutual hand or rope connection. In *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building*, Brown instructed her dancer to walk down the facade of a seven-storey building, strapped into a mountaineering harness. Brown's description of the whole process is deceptively simplistic: "A natural activity under the stress of an unnatural setting. Gravity reneged. Vast scale. Clear order. You start at the top, walk straight down, stop at the bottom." *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building* tested the human body in relation to gravity, using the strangeness and wonder of mechanics combined with an ordinary movement such as walking in city life. This choreography Brown has since then performed with great success in various cities.

In those years, Brown was joined by other choreographers such as Lucinda Childs, whose performance *Calico Mingling* took place in 1973 at Robert Moses Plaza in Fordham University. *Calico Mingling*, a film by the French-American filmmaker Babette Mangolte is recorded on grainy ten-minute black and white 16 mm film stock and takes on several perspectives from close up and far away. Seen from a distance and sometimes from above, like chess pieces on a board, four dancers march backward and forward, raising and lowering their arms in geometric repetitive patterns. *Calico Mingling* is exemplary of Mangolte's sensitivity to the particular aesthetics and timing of Childs' minimalist site-specific choreography and their shared fascination with urban space as a pro-scenium setting for their stagings.

Whereas Childs and Brown's works were documented in a straightforward manner, Elaine Summers, one of the original members of the Judson Dance Theater, went a step further. In *Two Girls Downtown Iowa*, she instructed two women to rush toward each other on a crowded pavement at the



Trisha Brown, *Man Walking Down the Side of a Building*, 1970.
Courtesy of the artist.

ARGOS CENTRE FOR ART AND MEDIA ARGOSMAGAZINE N°01 JAN - MAR 2011

slowest of slow-motion speeds. While the film was not shot in Manhattan but in the deep Midwest, it is nevertheless Summers New York style and sensibility that endowed her to create this merging of the performativity and mediality. Summers created a remarkable conflation of her choreography mimic and at the same time reflecting its filmic staging, literally giving vision to the question of what happens in that charged moment when a dancer activates a space. Summers achieved a kinetic effect and almost painterly moment-by-moment composition, which stands for her interest in the processes that constitute modern dance's vocabulary as a socially engaged artistic form of expression up to this day. In a similar spirit of inquisition, Bob Parent's *Transformation on a Soho Street* takes as its filmic outset a participatory costumed dance event conceived and organized by Ruth Heller Coron on Prince Street in October 1973. Parent goes beyond his assignment of simply documenting the performers actions. He rather aims at extending the documentary film into a candid, intimate experience and commentary of the event. An intimate act that is part of a public spectacle. Parent's recording of this stylized performance amidst the bustle of everyday life oscillates between a staging of a documentary and a documentary of a staging. In contrast to the desire of capturing the 'live' experience on the street, Jonas', Parent's and Summers' visual interpretations of public performances stand for two instances of transcription: First, the city becomes part of the image of the performance; and second, the performance becomes part of the image of Manhattan, which offered an ideal environment for the merging of the aesthetic and the political for performers, artists and choreographers.

Each film and video is an aesthetic marker of a particular moment in the city's history of coming of age in the industrial era. At the time Soho lofts were still un-renovated and developers had not yet started moving into the city as they did in the early 1980s. According to the writer Luc Sante, who arrived in New York during the early 1970s, it was a time of rawness and instability, marked by random fires, crime, blackouts, junkies, empty lots and derelict buildings. A city deeply immersed in its struggle with the effects of urban planning from the late 19th century and the shifting values of neighbourhoods, dictated by poverty and wealth throughout post war life until the late 1970s. A world, which due to New York's ever-increasing gentrification and its late capitalist urban politics, has been forever lost to future newcomers.

This particular dialectic of possibilities and destruction that the vernacular cityscape of New York harboured, gave fuel to painter, musician and filmmaker James Nares' early video performances. His experiments with gestures and objects, executed on the rooftop of his Downtown studio, have a particular consistency and elegance. Looking back, Nares, in an interview several

years ago, notes: "There's something sort of menacing about them. An element of danger is probably the best word for it. Something I courted. It seems to make everything more real." The idea of "making everything more real"³ comes to life in the precariousness yet simplicity of *Roof* (1975). The black and white video shows Nares encased at the neck by a swinging wooden plank that seems to whip his unseen body over the edge of a roof. By employing an illusionist trick with his camera, Nares' seemingly disembodied head drifts eerily through lower Manhattan. Doing so he conjoins the materiality and performativity of his body, his sculptures and the concreteness of his New York neighbourhood.

Works such as Jonas' *Songdelay*, Brown's *Leaning Duets* and *Man Walking Down a Building*, Mangle's film of the minimalist dance performance *Calico Mingling* by Lucinda Childs, Parent's film *Transformations on a SoHo Street*, Summers' *Two Girls Downtown Iowa* and Nares' *Roof*, all share a desire to encounter – through fragmentation, experience and visualization – the illusion and the reality of urban space. Over the decades they have become part of a continuous process in the production of meanings, uses and forms of the city that never ceases to fascinate. In hindsight, their seemingly spontaneous and sometimes even subversive acts have become essential for the creation of the nostalgia of a desolate, pre-gentrification New York City. A nostalgic image of New York that permanently re-invents itself and that continues to have a strong participatory draw.

BARBARA CLAUSEN lives in Montreal and Vienna. She is co-curator of the performance series and exhibition *Push and Pull* at MUMOK Vienna and TATE London (2010/2011) and a Research Fellow at the Gail and Stephen Jarislowsky Institute for Studies on Canadian Art in Montreal.

- (1) Joan Simon, 'Scenes and Variations: An Interview with Joan Jonas', in: *Art in America*, No. 7, July 1995, p. 75
- (2) Wendy Perron, 'Exporting Soho', *The Soho Weekly News*, December 30, 1979, p. 28
- (3) Ed Halter, Excerpt from 'James Nares's Downtown Empire Strikes Back', *The Village Voice*, May 13, 2008, <http://www.villagevoice.com/2008-05-13/film/empire-strikes-back/>

GESPREK MET EMANUELE CARCANO ALGA MARGEN RADICALE EENVOUD

Ive Stevenheydens

(NL) In 1996 richtte Emanuele Carcano in Milaan Alga Marghen op, een platenlabel en een uitgeverij van boeken die zich concentreert op twintigste eeuwse componisten, avant-garde artiesten en “experimentele historische obscuriteiten en buitenstanders”. Vandaag heeft Alga Marghen een dikke honderd releases op zijn naam staan. Bovendien startte Carcano de sublabels EEs’T Records en Marquis Records op, evenals het parallelle label Planam. De catalogus, waarvan een omvangrijk deel recentelijk in Argos’ collectie werd opgenomen, gaat verschillende richtingen uit. Hij overziet een periode van grofweg zeventig jaar poësie sonore, musique concrète, hedendaagse muziek en – vooral – werk van artiesten die de limieten van hun medium onderzoeken. Een gesprek met Carcano over zijn label, zijn fascinatie voor het object en zijn positie tegenover het verzamelen en de markt.

ARGOS CENTRE FOR ART AND MEDIA ARGOSMAGAZINE N°01 JAN - MAR 2011

IVE STEVENHEYDENS: Je was oorspronkelijk architect. Wat bracht je bij muziek?

EMANUELE CARCANO: “Het radicale en het extreme hebben me altijd aangetrokken. Ergens is dat naïef, ik ben namelijk geen zestien meer. Ik kom uit een familie van architecten, mijn vader en broer zijn het. In het Milaan van de late jaren zeventig, vroege jaren tachtig verkeerde architectuur in een diepe crisis. Ook de kwaliteit van de academie zat in een neergaande spiraal – iemand studeerde bijvoorbeeld af met een vuistdikke thesis getiteld *Alles wat men mij hier niet verteld heeft*. Persoonlijk vond ik de school makkelijk, fascinerend en amusant, maar het vak leerde ik van bevriende architecten. In die periode hing alles nauw samen: als student architectuur leerde ik ook veel over design, literatuur, beeldende kunst, enzovoort. We luisterden naar freejazz en ook naar Britse new wave – The Cure, Bauhaus en Joy Division als voorbeelden. Dat laatste was in die periode in Milaan overigens erg ongewoon. Persoonlijk evolueerde ik van daaruit naar andere muziekvormen zoals de power electronics van Whitehouse, de industrial van Nurse With Wound en het destijds vrij unieke werk van The Residents. Ik maakte geen overstap van architectuur naar muziek. Wel groeide muziek van een vorm van vertier door naar een meer serieuze bezigheid. Samen met de utopische en experimentele architectuur en design van groepen en mensen als het Japanse Metabolism Architecture, de Italianen van Archizoom Association en Superstudio, of het Londense Archigram en de Britse architect Peter Cook, ontdekte ik steeds meer muziek. In een tijd van een corrupte socialistische regering waarin de televisie enkel poppy dansmuziek propageerde, raakte ik gefascineerd door musique concrète, geluidspoëzie, elektronische en hedendaagse muziek.”

IS: In 1996 zette je die fascinatie om in actie en richtte je Alga Marghen op. Wat leidde ertoe om die stap te nemen?

EC: “Ik was een verwoede verzamelaar en koesterde een fascinatie voor het object, alsook voor de *first edition*. Niet de financiële waarde interesseerde me, maar de filosofie er achter: een eerste uitgave staat voor het moment waarop iets voor het eerst publiek wordt. Al verzamelend groeide ook mijn netwerk; steeds meer kunstenaars en andere verzamelaars leerde ik kennen. Bijgevolg steeg ook de interesse, om zelf ‘iets’ uit te brengen. In Milaan, een stad waar tot vandaag kennis en cultuur ontbreken, voelde ik dit instinctief aan. En na de release van Hermann Nitsch’ *Musik Der 60. Aktion, Berlin 1978 / Musik Für Rita Nitsch Geburtstag* belden ook winkels me op om dit werk te verkopen. Een tweede en derde release kwamen snel, en terwijl Alga Marghen een catalogus werd, groeide ik uit tot een uitgever zonder economisch plan. Persoonlijke contacten met de kunstenaars en verzamelaars zijn voor mij nog steeds het belangrijkste.

De kennis die ik verspreid in de publicaties vergaar ik uit eerste hand. Overigens: de naam Alga Marghen is een verzinzel, ik vond dat mijn label moest klinken als de naam van een vrouw.”

IS: Hoe selecteer je kunstenaars voor Alga Marghen?

EC: “Dat is niet complex, al verloopt het via veel verschillende manieren. De start is altijd mijn persoonlijke context: mijn werk, mijn ervaringen en wat mijn label voordien deed, spelen een beslissende rol. Zonder dat er een plan bestaat, kent Alga Marghen een continuïteit. Het sonore oeuvre van kunstenaars onder wie Philip Corner, Walter Marchetti, Robert Ashley of Charlemagne Palestine is vrij goed vertegenwoordigd in de catalogus van Alga Marghen. Vanuit zulke ‘ankerpunten’ bouw ik verder de collectie uit. In de toekomst zou ik bijvoorbeeld meer met Nam June Paik willen werken en met La Monte Young – al ligt dat niet voor de hand. Belangrijk voor mij is overigens dat er tussen mij en de kunstenaars steeds meer bestaat dan louter een werkrelatie. We delen namelijk een avontuur – de publicatie – waardoor er een vriendschapsband ontstaat.”

IS: De uitgaven van Alga Marghen zijn gekenmerkt door soberheid: de lay-out beperkt zich bijvoorbeeld meestal tot zwart en wit. Ook heb je wel een website, maar daarop staat enkel het logo van het label. Voorts kies je er zelf voor om jezelf niet in het centrum te plaatsen. Het lijkt er op dat jij en Alga Marghen liever ongezien zijn, onopgemerkt blijven.

EC: “Het uitbrengen van teksten of platen als kunstwerken zelf interesseert me niet. Die keuze ligt bij de kunstenaar, niet bij de uitgever. Voor mij hebben krachtige teksten en geluid geen verbloemende context nodig. Als ik bijvoorbeeld het werk van Nam June Paik zou uitgeven in een erg blitse verpakking, verkoop ik – alle proporties in acht genomen – platen zoals Depeche Mode. Die zet zou echter een verkeerd referentiekader bieden. Dit soort werk moet op een zo neutraal mogelijke manier uitgegeven worden. In dit proces interesseert ‘schoonheid’ me met andere woorden niet of nauwelijks, ‘juistheid’ wel. Ook het uitgeven van bijvoorbeeld gesigneerde exemplaren of handgemaakte, artisanale edities vind ik vrij onelegant. Dit wordt enkel gedaan om een vlottere verkoop te bewerkstelligen. Uiteindelijk vormt mijn manier van werken voor het label ook een soort van esthetiek: de inhoud moet radicaal zijn en de editie stijlvol, doch zo eenvoudig mogelijk. Ik kies dus niet enkel voor een industrieel design – cd’s verschijnen bijvoorbeeld in gestandaardiseerde digipacks – maar probeer over het algemeen communicatie en promotie te vermijden in de hoop het werk zelf zuiver te houden. In diezelfde lijn ligt overigens mijn relatie tot ‘sound art’, een trendy term die ik haat omdat die ook verwachtingen schept. Het labelt werken meteen als ‘kunst’. Los daarvan opent

Alga Marghen zich de laatste jaren steeds meer voor het publiek. Ik besef dat praten over deze publicaties en deze kunstenaars belangrijk is. Het anekdotische interesseert me daarbij niet, wel het zoeken naar overlappingsen, naar een moment in de tijd en het belang ervan.”

IS: Als uitgever kan je niet zuiver altruïstisch te werk gaan. Alga Marghen hoort uiteindelijk te verkopen.

EC: “Sinds mijn jeugd research ik muziek en bouw ik bijgevolg ook een privénetwerk op. In de loop van het bestaan van Alga Marghen veranderde veel, bijvoorbeeld qua werkwijze. De distributie verliep eerst spontaan en nu gestructureerd. Fax en telefoon werden vervangen door het snellere internet. Alga Marghen krijgt regelmatig geld binnen, en dat wordt vervolgens terug geïnvesteerd in nieuwe projecten. Ik kan er van overleven en ik heb een inkomen. Maar een zeilboot plus een tweede huis zitten er voorlopig niet in. Tegelijkertijd groeide ik op in een familie die nooit financiële moeilijkheden kende, hetgeen uiteraard ook helpt. Aan de andere kant is Alga Marghen nooit een label geweest dat rekening houdt met een commercieel plan, het administratieve gedeelte schiet er soms een beetje bij in.”



Anton Bruhin, *Rotomotor*, 2001. Courtesy and copyright the artist and Alga Marghen.

IS: Hoe sta je tegenover het internet en het downloaden van muziek? Heeft dit een gevolg voor je inkomsten? Is er een economische variabele die belangrijk is voor jou en Alga Marghen?

EC: “Persoonlijk ben ik niet geïnteresseerd in het downloaden van muziek, voor mij zijn ook het document en de editie erg belangrijk. Op verschillende sites is muziek van Alga Marghen te koop of illegaal te downloaden, hetgeen het label en de kunstenaars democratisert – een goede zaak. Of dit een effect heeft op de verkoop weet ik niet precies, al schat ik dat eerder positief in. Mensen kunnen direct horen wat de muziek waard is, hetgeen hen misschien overhaalt de editie te kopen. Ik denk alleszins niet

dat dit een negatief gevolg kan hebben. Volgens mij zijn er weinig mensen die blij zijn met een abstracte, virtuele download zonder de eigenlijke release van de kunstenaar, zonder de booklet, context of beelden. Alles tezamen geloof ik niet zo zeer in het digitale veld met betrekking tot dit soort muziek.”

IS: Argos organiseerde in samenwerking met Bozar recentelijk twee avonden rond Alga Marghen (2 & 3.12.2010, met Anton Bruhin, Rhodri Davies, Ghédalia Tazartès en Ben Patterson, in het kader van het festival Open Archive #2). Naast die publieke momenten in kunstencentra, nemen ondermeer Centre Pompidou (Parijs), MACBA (Barcelona) en het Museo Reina Sofia (Madrid) de werken van Alga Marghen in hun collectie. Ook Argos kocht een deel van uw catalogus aan. Wat is voor jou het belang daarvan?

EC: “Dat is iets waar de instituten op dit moment naar vragen. Het doet me plezier en eer aan. Geen enkele collectie is dezelfde, en ook de manier waarop Alga Marghen in de verschillende kunstencentra gearchiveerd wordt is zeer uiteenlopend. Om dit soort zaken te archiveren bestaan er overigens geen vaste regels. De institutionele context biedt op zich wel veel mogelijkheden. Zo kunnen we via de collecties bijvoorbeeld een ruimer geïnteresseerd publiek bereiken. Ik werk dan ook graag met de instituten samen om hun focus scherper te stellen en hun archief te articuleren in de diepte. Veel kunstenaars zijn immers ook verbonden aan andere platenlabels of uitgevers, en historisch kan een collectie ook uitgediept worden.”

IS: Een van de meest recente releases op Alga Marghen is *De Musica Inversa* van Walter Marchetti, een box met vier cd's die het werk van de Italiaanse componist tussen 1965 en 1989 bloemleest. Opmerkelijk is het bijhorende boek waarin Marchetti een 'handleiding' uitschrijft voor het correcte en incorrecte gebruik van muziek. De musicoloog Gabriele Bonomo voorziet de 85 statements van commentaar.

EC: “Ik ontmoette Marchetti, een discipel van Stockhausen en Cage, midden jaren tachtig. Deze radicale en compromisloze componist die nooit een succes kende binnen de hedendaagse muziek of de kunstwereld is een belangrijke invloed voor mij en Alga Marghen. Het gelijknamige essay dat verscheen bij *De Musica Inversa*, een collectie van sinds kort niet meer verkrijgbaar werk, staat voor mij persoonlijk voor een kleine grondverschuiving in de muzikale wereld. In zeer poëtische omschrijvingen – aforismen of haast Japanse dichtkunst – reflecteert Marchetti over het wezen van de muziek, over het componeren en de daarbij horende problemen – een zeer zwartgallige analyse. De commentaar van Bonomo verrijkt zijn ideeën en weerlegt ze. Samengevat werpt dit een dubbele polariteit op die hedendaagse componisten in praktijk



Emanuele Carcano. Photo: Line Ulrika Christiansen.

kunnen omzetten. Wat ik hier zo mooi aan vind, is dat deze accumulatie van persoonlijke, hoogst negatieve statements een enorme opening biedt voor het wezen van de muziek. Aan de andere kant onderstrepen ze het levensbelang van muziek voor Marchetti; iemand die vanaf zijn beginjaren als componist herhaaldelijk zegt dat hij zich in een doodlopend straatje bevindt. *De Musica Inversa* handelt over het componeren en musiceren tegen wil en dank, uit existentiële noodzaak.”

IS: Welke evolutie voor de toekomst zie je na vijftien jaar Alga Marghen?

EC: “De catalogus wordt steeds meer dens en complex, vandaar dat er bijvoorbeeld zijlabels zijn ontstaan. Alga Marghen brengt muziek en boeken uit, maar raakt altijd aan andere vlakken zoals beeldende kunst, literatuur, dans, architectuur enzovoort. Daarnaast wil ik meer boeken uitgeven, en misschien ook films en audiovisuele documenten van kunstenaars. Zelf verhuis ik om persoonlijke redenen naar Qatar, zowat het tegenovergestelde van Milaan en Italië. Van daaruit bereik ik wellicht een heel ander publiek, en zal ik in contact met heel andere kunstenaars komen. Ik blijf dus continu zaken ontdekken. Dat vind ik een bijzonder prettig perspectief.”

ARGOS CENTRE FOR ART AND MEDIA ARGOSMAGAZINE N°01 JAN - MAR 2011

In de **ARGOS MEDIA LIBRARY** is een deel van de catalogus van Alga Marghen te raadplegen en te beluisteren. Het betreft een corpus van cd's en lp's die een periode van ruim zeventig jaar omvatten. In de collectie is werk opgenomen van ondermeer Vito Acconci, Robert Ashley, Anton Bruhin, Philip Corner, Rhodri Davies, Bernard Heidsieck, Nam June Paik, Walter Marchetti, Charlotte Moorman, Charlemagne Palestine, Ben Patterson en Ghédalia Tazartès. De Argos Media Library, die eveneens om en bij de 3000 video- en filmwerken en 4000 publicaties bevat, is te bezoeken op afspraak via medialibrary@argosarts.org



Erik Bünger, *A Lecture on Schizophrenia*, 2009. Courtesy of the artist.



Till Roeskens, *Vidéocartographies: Aida, Palestine*, 2009. Courtesy of the artist.

Erik Bünger

EN The Swedish artist, composer, musician and writer Erik Bünger (1976) works with re-contextualising existing media in performances, installations and web projects. In *Gospels*, sections of Hollywood interviews are removed from their original contexts, interacting to form a new, seemingly coherent whole. Yet these pre-existing works frequently conflict; Bünger explores the disjunction between replaying and experiencing in his *A Lecture on Schizophrenia*. This simultaneously analytical and performative work highlights the relationship between sound and perceived 'reality', using popular references and familiar footage including Barak Obama and Woody Allen. Similar tensions are exposed in *God Moves on the Water*, in which two songs about the sinking of the Titanic are combined to form a third narrative. In *The Third Man*, the negative power of music is explored. Displacing and recombining familiar material, Bünger challenges the separation between authentic and simulated experiences.

AVAILABLE WORKS

A Lecture on Schizophrenia
2009, video, 37'18", colour, English spoken

Gospels
2006, video, 10'11", colour, English spoken

God Moves on the Water
2008, video, 3'14", colour, English spoken

The Third Man
2010, video, 49'24", colour, English spoken



Erik Bünger, *A Lecture on Schizophrenia*, 2009. Courtesy of the artist.

Libia Castro and Ólafur Ólafsson

EN Libia Castro (1969), from Spain, and Ólafur Ólafsson (1973), from Iceland, are drawn to the new global phenomenon of transculturalism, and the mobility that enables. They enable distinct and sometimes conflicting approaches to transform each other and open up new readings of themselves when combined. *Lobbyists* engages with the functioning of the European Union, examining some of the questions raised by the recently-emerged role of the lobbyist. *Caregivers* presents a spectrum of one particular group of migrants – the Ukrainian women who work as live-in carers for the elderly in Italy. Opening up the experiences of migrants trying to claim asylum in Europe, *Avant-garde Citizens* consists of the personal stories of eight migrants, three of which are shown in this programme. Presented against an incongruous background of the Dutch landscape, these tales are both moving and disquieting.

AVAILABLE WORKS

Lobbyists
2009, video, 18', colour, English & French spoken, English & French subtitles

Caregivers
2008, video, 16', colour, English & Italian spoken, English & French subtitles

Avant-garde citizens: Mpia's story
2007-2008, video, 17', colour, English & Lingala spoken, English subtitles

Avant-garde citizens: Samm's story
2007-2008, video, 36', colour, English spoken, English subtitles

Avant-garde citizens: Janneke's story
2007-2008, video, 22', colour, Dutch spoken, English subtitles



Libia Castro and Ólafur Ólafsson, *Lobbyists*, 2009. Courtesy of the artists.

Till Roeskens

(EN) The work of Till Roeskens (1974) develops in the confrontation with a given territory and those who try to draw their own ways within it. What he brings back from his wanderings, be it a book, a video film, a slide show lecture or other light forms, is never meant to be a simple report, but an invitation to exercise one's perception, a questioning about what we are able to seize from the infinite complexity of the world. His 'attempts to find his bearings' are done with a constant concern to touch an uninformed audience and to make them become co-authors of the work. In *Vidéocartographies: Aïda, Palestine* Roeskens asks several inhabitants of the Palestinian refugee camp Aïda to draw him a map. The camera records the inverse of these scribbles, showing the marks of the black pen through the white paper. Men, women and children mark out buildings, identify the homes of family or friends, or the site of a shooting or another event. Routes are marked – obstacles, checkpoints, barbed wire. Slowly, these rough marks form a readable text depicting communities, ways of living, ways of surviving. Past, present and future are inscribed onto the paper, the dynamics of growth and change, both sudden and slow. Personal stories unfold, revealing the resilience, strength and adaptability of the invisible people behind the voices.

AVAILABLE WORK

Vidéocartographies: Aïda, Palestine
2009, video, 46', black and white, Arab spoken,
English subtitles



Till Roeskens, *Vidéocartographies: Aïda, Palestine*, 2009.
Courtesy of the artist.

In order to present artist film and video to a large audience, Argos distributes video works from its collection. The **ARGOS DISTRIBUTION CATALOGUE** consists of over 1000 historical and recent works by artists. The catalogue spans a period from the 1960s to the present. Monthly, new works are added. These works are available to hire for public screenings and exhibitions. For more information about distribution visit our website on www.argosarts.org. For questions and inquiries, please contact us on distribution@argosarts.org.

(FR) Dans cette rubrique, Andrea Cinel propose une sélection d'ouvrages consultables à la Media Library d'Argos. Dans ce numéro, la proposition concerne la relation entre les événements historiques et l'architecture des média face à les pratiques artistiques contemporaines.



« Ce sont les médias de masse qui ont créé le Kennedy que nous connaissons et sa mort provoqua un glissement tectonique dans le paysage des communications, en provoquant dans la psyché populaire des failles profondes qui n'ont pas encore été comblées. » James G. Ballard, *La Foire aux atrocités*, Tristram, Paris, 2003, P.70.

(1) Dans l'exposition *L'événement. Les images comme acteurs de l'histoire* (16.01.2007 – 01.04.2007, Jeu de Paume, Paris), une série de représentations de moments historiques, tels que la guerre de Crimée, le 11 septembre, les congés payés et la conquête de l'air, soulignait la manière dont les images construisent notre perception des événements, leur rhétorique et leur contribution à l'écriture de l'histoire. Si dans le passé, la gravure et la peinture ont joué en rôle fondamental pour raconter et construire une mémoire collective, la photographie est rapidement devenue le médium principal pour accompagner dans la presse le reportage des faits quotidiens.

(2) À cet égard, l'attentat des *Twin Towers* fut couvert par un nombre limité d'images, même s'il s'agit d'un des événements le plus photographié de l'histoire des médias. *Diplopie* de Clément Chéroux analyse, de façon synchronique, les causes et effets de cette globalisation iconographique, mais aussi, au niveau diachronique, comment le mécanisme de répétition se base sur la citation directe d'images emblématiques préexistantes.

(3) Par ailleurs, pour soulever des questions liées aux représentations dans l'art, l'essai *Aesthetic Journalism* de Alfredo Cramerotti propose une lecture des tendances contemporaines et leurs relations avec le journalisme. Si les artistes s'approprient des genres comme l'interview, le reportage et le documentaire, les arts audiovisuels se tournent vers une nouvelle manière de faire du journalisme d'investigation où le domaine esthétique se confond avec la représentation de la réalité et la chronique des faits. Pour illustrer cette réflexion, certains projets sont pris comme exemples : c'est notamment le cas de *Border Device(s)/ The Road Map* (2003) du collective Multiplicity, de *The Rwanda Project* (1994-2000) de Alfredo Jaar ou encore, *Hostage: The Bachar Tapes* (1999-2001) de The Atlas Group.

(4) Enfin, l'ouvrage *Un pays supplémentaire: la création contemporaine dans l'architecture des médias* de Pascale Cassagnau, porte, quant à lui, sur la question de l'architecture des médias, en se focalisant plus particulièrement sur le cas de la télévision. Il est intéressant de relever le fait que ce livre a pour caractéristique d'ouvrir le débat par quatre entretiens de spécialistes de l'image médiatisée dans l'art contemporain : Johan Grimonprez, Olivier Bardin, Harun Farocki et Jean-Baptiste. De plus, celui-ci contient également une anthologie d'essais portant sur une série d'œuvres qui replacent la question d'une politique des médias au sein du processus de création.

LIVRES A CONSULTER

Pascale Cassagnau, *Un pays supplémentaire. La création contemporaine dans l'architecture des médias*, 2010.
Clément Chéroux, *Diplopie. L'image photographique à l'ère des médias globalisés: essai sur le 11 septembre 2001*, 2009.
Alfredo Cramerotti, *Aesthetic Journalism. How to Inform Without Informing*, 2009.
Michel Poivert (éditeur), *L'événement. Les images comme acteurs de l'histoire*, 2007.

VIDÉOS A CONSULTER

The Atlas Group / Walid Ra'ad, *Hostage: The Bachar Tapes*, 2000.
T.R. Uthco and Ant Farm, *The Eternal Frame*, 1975
Johan Grimonprez, *Dial H-I-S-T-O-R-Y*, 1997.
Julia Meltzer & David Thorne, *It's not my memory of it: three recollected documents*, 2007.

ARGOS MEDIA LIBRARY Cette sélection de livres qui compte parmi les quelques 4000 ouvrages de la bibliothèque d'Argos est consultable sur place et sur rendez-vous (via email: medialibrary@argosarts.org). La médiathèque de près de 3000 films et vidéos est ainsi enrichie par un grand nombre d'ouvrages de référence lesquels permettent une lecture ou un approfondissement des œuvres filmiques et vidéo. Une collection de référence regroupant entre autres catalogues de festivals et expositions, monographies, livres d'artistes, magazines d'art, essais et compilations de critiques sur la culture visuelle et audiovisuelle.

BOÎTE NOIRE OU CUBE BLANC ?

(FR) Neuf jours durant, le festival *Performatik* met en lumière l'art de la performance ou live art contemporain. Pour la deuxième fois, Kaaitheater collabore à cette occasion avec d'autres partenaires bruxellois qui enrichissent le projet de leur propre expertise. Chez Argos se déroulera *Down Low Up High – Performing the Vernacular* (cf. p. 24-29). Barbara Clausen, la commissaire de cette programmation, donnera une conférence le 2 mars au Kaaistudio's.

En collaborant avec autres institutions, le Kaaitheater n'observe pas uniquement ces formes d'art par le prisme du théâtre et de la danse, mais aussi par celui des arts plastiques, où l'art de la performance a connu et connaît toujours un formidable essor.

Le festival s'ouvre au Wiels avec *The Other Tradition*, qui expose un genre nouveau de création artistique développée par un groupe de jeunes artistes internationaux, qui réfléchissent tous à la manière de réaliser des œuvres d'art dans lesquelles la forme matérielle est écartée au profit de situations construites, d'événements ou d'actions. La plupart de ces artistes s'impliquent eux-mêmes pour réaliser des actions en direct ou demandent à des acteurs de suivre leurs instructions.

La plasticienne Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster et le musicien berlinois Ari Benjamin Meyers visitent le théâtre, tandis que Kris Verdonck, artiste en résidence au Kaai, présente une exposition hors les murs. Tous trois s'inspirent de Kafka. Après avoir disséqué les codes du théâtre et du bureau, Deep Blue se penche sur ceux de la chambre d'hôtel. Barbara Matijevic et Giuseppe Chico reprennent deux performances-lectures très applaudies et présentent le troisième volet de leur trilogie en première mondiale. Ivo Dimchev, l'un des performeurs les plus curieux du moment, est aussi à l'affiche du Kaaitheater... avec son chien.

Black box ou white cube? (Boîte noire ou cube blanc ?) Spectacle ou exposition ? Le festival explore les frontières et dissèque les codes. L'élément reliant est la performance en direct, la rencontre entre le spectateur et l'artiste, ici et maintenant.

24.02.2011 – 05.03.2011
www.kaaitheater.be

02.03.2011 – 19.00
 Barbara Clausen
 Conférence sur *Down Low Up High - Performing the Vernacular*
 Kaaistudio's / Gratuit



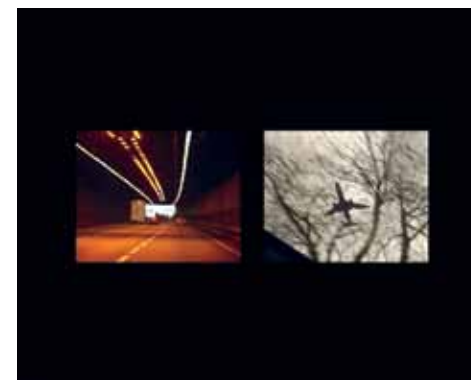
I AM 1984 (photo Julien Correc-Popamine)

Performatik 2011 est une initiative de Kaaitheater en collaboration avec Argos Centre for Art & Media, Beursschouwburg, Bozar, La Raffinerie/Charleroi-Danses, CC Strombeek-Bever, QO2, Wiels Contemporary Art Centre.

20.01.2011
 Chris Petit and Iain Sinclair
London Orbital

(2002, video, 76', colour, English spoken)

(EN) *London Orbital* is an unusual, visionary film by the British writers and filmmakers Chris Petit (1949) and Iain Sinclair (1943) about the world's longest ring-road, the 188-kilometer M25, or 'London Orbital' as it's commonly known. The film plays with the conventions of the road movie and presents a cinematographic excursion into futuristic literature. It is also a meditation on the rapid passing of time, on the genesis of memory (collective or otherwise), on the difference between tape and film, and between word, sound and image. Sinclair wrote a book of the same title about his walk around the M25 in which he reflects on the current economic, political and social situation in Great Britain. Rather than filming the book literally, Petit went on a car ride around the ring-road. This resulted in a stream of images that evokes the serene mood that driving sometimes brings. *London Orbital* is therefore a reflection on the difference between walking and driving, and a dialogue between these two writers, who are also filmmakers.



Chris Petit and Iain Sinclair, *London Orbital*, 2002. Courtesy and copyright of the artists and Illuminations Films, London.

10.02.2011
 Margot Benacerraf
Araya

(1959, 35 mm, 82', black & white, Spanish spoken, English subtitles)

(EN) "And below the everyday, uncover the unusual," wrote Berthold Brecht in 1959 after having discovered *Araya*. The restoration of Margot Benacerraf's masterpiece is a landmark in cinema history. Acclaimed as a forerunner of feminist Latina cinema, *Araya* has all but been forgotten since the initial acclaim it garnered when it shared the *Cannes International Critics Prize* with *Hiroshima, Mon Amour*. *Araya*, a peninsula in Venezuela, is one of the most arid places on earth. For five hundred years the region's salt has been exploited manually. Benacerraf (1926) captures the life of the salineros and their backbreaking work in breathtaking images. Three different stories underline the harsh life of this region — all of which vanished with the arrival of industrial exploitation. Benacerraf has described her film as "a cinematic narration based on script writing rather than a spontaneous action, a feature documentary, the opposite of Italian neo-realism". Or as Jean Renoir told her after seeing the film: "Above all ... don't cut a single image!"



Margot Benacerraf, *Araya*, 1959, Courtesy and copyright of the artists and Milestone Films, Harrington Park.

10.03.2011

Mohamed Soueid

A Civil War

(2002, video, 76', colour, English spoken)

EN Lebanese video pioneer, filmmaker, writer and critic Mohamed Soueid (1959) blends narrative with prose, essay with poem, and conversation with speculation. His documentaries are embodiments of his personal life and try to address lost causes. *Civil War*, the final part of a trilogy of the same name, investigates the mysterious death of Soueid's cinematographer friend Mohamed Douybaess. In the aftermath of the Lebanese civil war, the film gently skirts the man's memory through a series of interviews with friends and family members. These fragments clearly address important issues that still prevail in the lives of the Lebanese post-war generation. Through dentists, for example, we learn that the Lebanese have the highest rate of tooth decay in the world - a symptom of collective trauma. Recurring images and sounds of war, destruction, and growling and howling animals are juxtaposed with a different more promising Lebanese reality, however these sounds over the shots of Beirut pedestrians, seem to suggest the bestial nature under the city's civilized veneer. Through various discourses, whether it is the interviewees talking to the camera or the desolate woman's monologue during the cafe encounter, *Civil War* maps the Lebanese society's repression and post trauma stress and uneasiness which seems to suggest that psychologically, Lebanon is still at war within the minds of its people.

Screening in the presence of Mohamed Soueid. In collaboration with Les Halles and the festival *Beyrouth plus belle qu'elle ne l'était*. www.halles.be

French subtitles: Les Halles with the support of Rudy Demotte, Ministre-Président du Gouvernement de la Communauté française. Cinéma Arenberg is showing the whole trilogy in March:
Civil War (10.03 – 21.30 / 28.03 – 19.30)
Tango of Yearning (20.03 – 18.00 / 24.03 – 18.00)
Night Fall (21.03 – 19.30 / 27.03 – 18.00)



Mohamed Soueid, *Civil War*, 2002. Courtesy of the artist.

ECRAN D'ART are monthly screenings of artists' film and/or video jointly organised by Argos, Beursschouwburg and Cinema Arenberg, in collaboration with La Cambre Academy. Screenings take place at 21.30, the entrance fee is € 8/6,6.

More Information:
 Ecran d'Art / Cinéma Arenberg,
 Koninginnegalerij 26 Galerie de la Reine, 1000 Brussels.
www.arenberg.be

ARGOS CENTRE FOR ART AND MEDIA ARGOSMAGAZINE N°01 JAN - MAR 2011

Jordi Colomer

Recent Works

NL De Spaanse kunstenaar Jordi Colomer (1962) bestudeert de manieren waarop de hedendaagse stad het menselijk gedrag kan beïnvloeden. Aandacht schenkend aan de sociologisch, psychologische en filosofische dimensies van zijn onderwerpen, alsook aan de ongebruikelijke of vreemde aspecten van het alledaagse, laat Colomer zich kritisch uit over de relatie tussen mens, het stedelijk weefsel en de architectuur van de stad. Colomer werkt met verschillende media, waaronder voornamelijk fotografie en video. In zijn grootschalige installaties eigent hij de infrastructuur van de stad toe om deze om te vormen tot een eigen setting; een fictieve situatie die hij 'expanded theatre' noemt. Na zijn opgemerkte solotoonstelling in Jeu de Paume in Parijs, brengt hij in het voorjaar van 2011 in Bozar en Argos ensembles van nieuwe werken.



Jordi Colomer, *Avenida Ixtapaluca (Houses for Mexico)*, 2010. Courtesy of the artist.

Ria Pacqué

Westerly Winds

NL Het werk van Ria Pacqué (1954) tast de mogelijke verschillen, intervallen en overlappingsen tussen fictie en realiteit af. De straat vormt daarbij haar onderzoeksveld. Als toeschouwer (hetgeen resulteert in fotografie en videowerk) en deelnemer (performances) van het publieke leven probeert ze een antwoord te vinden op de meest elementaire vragen van het bestaan. Ook haar interesse in het rituele, de *waan-zin* der godsdiensten, in anonimiteit en het ronddwalen in steden vormen belangrijke uitgangspunten voor het verzamelen van de beelden en geluiden die uiteindelijk haar werk vormen. Bij Argos toont Pacqué *Westerly Winds*, een in een nieuwe constellatie gegoten ensemble van vroege, recente en nieuwe werken.



Ria Pacqué, *Dive into Mankind*, 2009. Courtesy of the artist and Argos Centre for Art & Media.

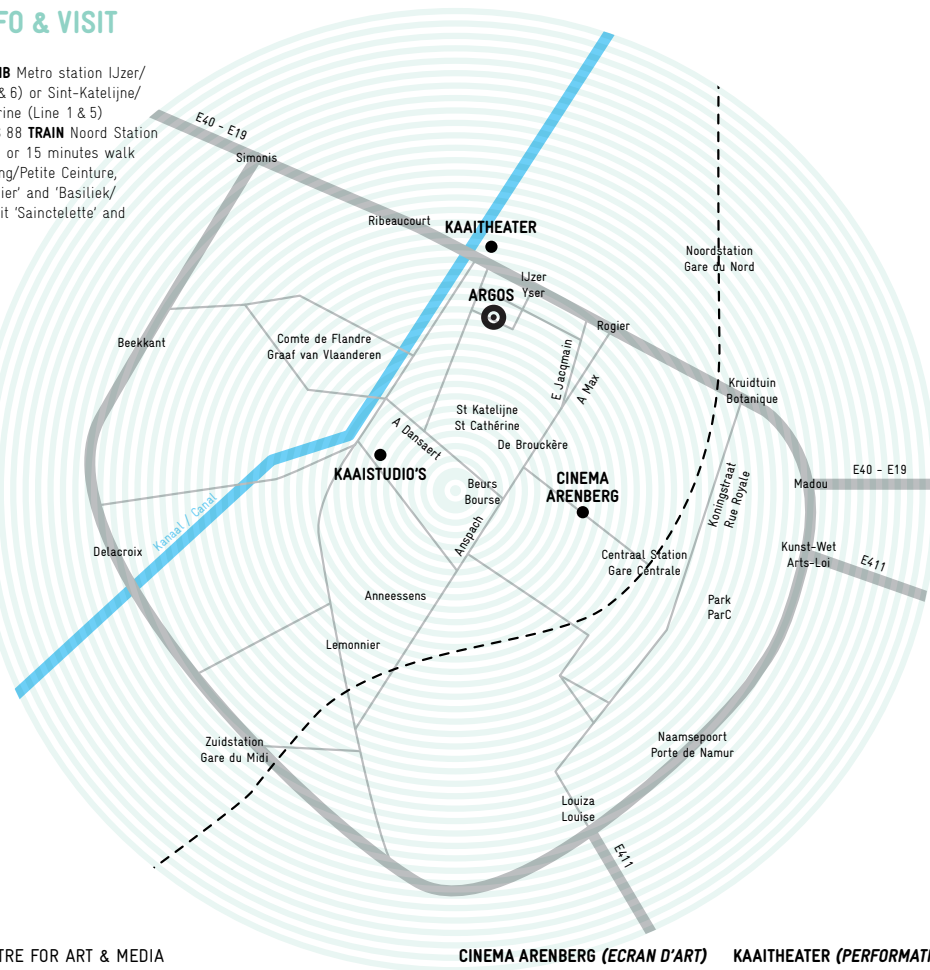


OPENING NIGHT

23.04.2011 18.00-21.00

INFO & VISIT

MIVB / STIB Metro station IJzer/ Yser (Line 2 & 6) or Sint-Katelijne/ Sainte-Catherine (Line 1 & 5)
TRAM 51 BUS 88 TRAIN Noord Station Nord + Metro or 15 minutes walk
CAR Binnenring/Petite Ceinture, between 'Rogier' and 'Basiliek/ Basilique', exit 'Sainctelette' and 'IJzer/Yser'



ARGOS CENTRE FOR ART & MEDIA
 Werfstraat 13 Rue du Chantier
 B-1000 Brussels
 +32 (0)2 229 00 03
 info@argosarts.org
 www.argosarts.org
 admission € 3/2
 opening hours: tue-sat 12.00-19.00

CINEMA ARENBERG (ECRAN D'ART)
 Koninginnegalerij 26
 Galerie de la Reine
 B-1000 Brussels
 +32 (0)2 512 80 63
 info@arenberg.be
 www.arenberg.be
 admission € 8/6,6

KAAItheater (PERFORMATIK)
 Sainctelettesquare 20
 Square Sainctelette
 B-1000 Brussels
 info@kaaitheater.be
 www.kaaitheater.be
 +32 (0)2 201 59 59

KAAIStudio's
 Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Vaakstraat
 81 Rue Notre-Dame du Sommeil
 B-1000 Brussels

COLOPHON

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ARGOS CENTRE FOR ART AND MEDIA ARGOSMAGAZINE N°01 JAN - MAR 2011



CALENDAR

ARGOS CENTRE FOR ART AND MEDIA

TUE – SAT 12.00-19.00

WERFSTRAAT 13 RUE DU CHANTIER

B-1000 BRUSSELS

EXHIBITIONS

Hans Op de Beeck,

Sea of Tranquility

25.01 – 02.04.2011

OPENING NIGHT 22.01.2011 18.00-21.00

Shelly Silver,

here, his 這裡, 他的

25.01 – 02.04.2011

OPENING NIGHT 22.01.2011 18.00-21.00

BLACK BOX

Down Low Up High – Performing the Vernacular

25.01 – 02.04.2011

OPENING NIGHT 22.01.2011 18.00-21.00

EXTRA MUROS

ECRAN D'ART

CINEMA ARENBERG

KONINGINNEGALERIJ 26 GALERIE DE LA REINE

B-1000 BRUSSELS

Chris Petit and Iain Sinclair

London Orbital

20.01.2011 21.30

Margot Benacerraf

Araya

10.02.2011 21.30

Mohamed Soueid

A Civil War

10.03.2011 21.30

PERFORMATIK 2011

LECTURE

Barbara Clausen

on *Down Low Up High - Performing the Vernacular*

02.03.2011 19.00

KAAISTUDIO'S

ONZE-LIEVE-VROUW VAN VAAKSTRAAT 81

RUE NOTRE-DAME DU SOMMEIL

B-1000 BRUSSELS