

Connivence - Biennale de Lyon 2001

One World

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Red is the color of William Eggleston's ceiling. Red is the color of Jean-Luc Mylayne's fish. And each of the photographers on show here offers the eye a whole world. The images stand out firstly for their formal qualities and their sensory content, for what makes each of them an experience of the world: not its reflection but the sign of its existence as people – some of them at least – apprehend it. This is no parallel world, but our own, now. Not necessarily what is best (or worst), but what is most alive about it – its essence. Neither the ordinary nor the exceptional. Something to live by. So this is a matter of talent and choice, of generosity on the part of the photographers and openness of spirit on the part of the viewers, to whom much will be given in return. Some photographs resist. Some seize the viewer at first sight, accompanying him from that moment on. Some refuse to be forgotten, remaining in the memory and resurfacing sometimes days or years later, their very density allowing them to stand firm against the never-ending flow of images that wash over us. Why or how remains a mystery. Photographs in black and white or color, medium or large-format prints, single images or series – these are the work of pioneers, or retired photographers, taking pictures every day, very gradually building up a body of work. Some of these images are journalism, others are computer-assisted. Esthetics are not the sole consideration: their creators draw on the humanities, on anthropology or philosophy, on such other arts as literature, cinema, theatre, dance, while some images can attain to true poetry. Their source, then, may be one among several activities of a visual artist – an artist also working with film or video – or may be the sole means of expression imaginable for him. Most of these artists make free play with the frontier between everyday reality, fiction and even the virtual, working in a variety of modes including the ludic and asserting to a greater or lesser degree their relationship with the present. Each of the characteristics mentioned could apply to several of the photographers concerned – their images meeting and crossing – without there necessarily being any element of predictability. The only common denominator of these photographs, of which each in its own way shatters the notion of genre, is their irreducibility. What this exhibition sets out to test is not only the internal coherence of a given choice, but the subsequent possibility of relationships with works by other artists – the ability of such photographs to intersect with music, films and videos, performances, literature, dance, computer games, painting, installations and so on. These images are there for the relationship – distinctive and delicate, powerful and open-ended – they maintain with the world. First and foremost we spot familiar things – a color, a sky – then the animals and people William Eggleston's 'democratic' eye sets on the same plane. More formally selective, Yves Chaudouet is drawn to what he calls Details, in which flora, fauna and objects are granted their full importance; Xavier Ribas and Edward Grazda each contemplate a human community, more or less familiar, as it stands revealed in its Events and rites; and Jérôme Brézillon, focusing on the inhabitants of a small, but carefully chosen town in Texas is armed solely with the curiosity of a foreigner whose understanding grows in time with his discoveries.

Eggleston's Red Ceiling is our world, our environment which this bare light-bulb hanging from the ceiling, this fragment of a sign overhung by a vast, empty sky, this ginger dog slinking in shadow...

The first image is ageless and no one but he could have taken it. This is an exemplary photograph, so utterly made of so little: an area of bright red, three white and three black lines, a speck of yellow, the graphically precise structure that is the top of a doorframe, and the smutty poster with its chopped-off figures. Look up and you will see the light. Another photograph tells us a little more: the man who lives here stands naked – he too is red – between the walls of the windowless room with their urgent (metaphysical?) inscriptions. The subject is a friend of the photographer, they must be about the same age, around thirty-five, and both of them are drawn to colors and intensity of feeling. So what can happen in a red bedroom under a naked light? "The Red Ceiling photo is so powerful that I've never seen it reproduced in a way that satisfied me. Look at the actual dye transfer, you'd think it was fresh blood on the wall. For me taking this photo was like playing Bach: I knew that red is the hardest color to work with. Usually a little red is all you need, but working a whole area this color was an enormous challenge. It was very difficult. I've never seen a completely red image, except in advertising. This photo has kept its power intact. It jolts people every time.¹" Eggleston's eye makes a pattern out of something we would not necessarily have noticed, but which we all recognize. Thus we rediscover something he has invested with a new force, something he has endowed with the potential to engender fictions when the figures appear – the mother and her children standing dumbstruck at the threshold of their house. Still little known in France compared to the rest of Europe and the United States – where the appearance of John Szarkowski's William Eggleston's Guide in 1976 made him a major figure in photography – Eggleston will soon be the subject of a retrospective in Paris that will do justice to the ongoing body of work he has been developing with such extraordinary force and perseverance since the early 1970s. A quick look through dozens, hundreds of prints makes it clear that just about everything is grist to his mill, this brief selection providing only a glimpse of a photographic work in progress shooting off in all sorts of different, unexpected directions. Everything is possible for his camera, wherever he happens to be is home: other States, other countries, Berlin

or England or Africa - or the desert with its mauve cactus. Apart from what he has left us over the years, a trip through Memphis with Winston - his youngest son and one of the leading connoisseurs of his work - gives a good idea of what Eggleston is about, of what he singles out and how he handles it. First off, things are seen up close in a fairly normal setting; then something just as identifiable happens that takes on an extra dimension, a spookiness, a near-imperceptible quivering develops beneath the still-tranquil surface of the image. Or else there's a difference of tone, a frontal approach with just a touch of the unusual and total assurance in terms of effects, especially the shades of color: the sea-green pillar garlanded with red and blue bulbs, the pot-plant in a (red, again) supermarket trolley. "I don't know why I pick up on these isolated fragments. They're there. They exist. Sometimes they come to life, sometimes not. These objects are life today, some of them may seem trivial but via photography they can be changed into something powerful and very beautiful. I take photographs to show life today and also to see if it's possible.²" New Orleans could be the photogram, the trigger or the perfect summary of a late-70s American movie - yet all we see is two people entering an apartment. The small boy in the red sweater is his son William, but to get this picture there also had to be the storm, the boy's uneasy stance and slight frown. Claiming that everything can be photographed, Eggleston gets away with his purely subjective point of view, drawing on his profound responsiveness to what is around him, on a sort of no-comment acceleration, a sense of both the weirdness and the profound identity of things. Paradoxically for someone declaring himself "at war with the obvious", the images he comes up with are unchallengeably obvious. Each of them is also totally recognizable by its freedom of tone and the sheer directness of its vivid, frankly revelatory style. No gimmicks, no technical overkill, just the elegance of someone determined never to make his mind up in advance. "One of the things I really like is to go out walking with someone, without knowing where we're going. I like taking photos of what happens, whatever it may be. I can do this with all sorts of people and at any time of the day."³ So the aim is not to be locked in, to go out with other people and do what you feel like doing. The results are among his best work, the clouds in Waffle House Sign taking us back to the stunning Wedgwood Blue series of 1979: what is easier - and harder - to photograph than the sky?

A little water in the hollow of a graylichened rock becomes a Lake. Yves Chaudouet focuses on what he calls Details - plants, animals, objects, furniture - for what they have to say about themselves and what they can't cope with: one result is Abel's Bookshelves which offers us a portrait of Abel. A friend of Yves, Abel is a former restorer of frescoes; he lives in the South of France and is the owner of many art books which his annotations and added personal drawings render unique and doubly his own. The shelves he has built are heaped with cassettes and there is also some kind of device with black wires emerging from it. Abel has patched up one of the shelves with an unorthodox, neatly fitting addition, an insert that provides his portrait down to a T. Then there are the peony shoots in all the strangeness of the event they represent: this intense red somewhere between pink and brown, this sprouting amid barely perceptible signs of spring in a forgotten corner of a garden where the soil is heavy, the branches still without buds, the new greenery nor more than a few blades of grass. Such is the peony before the smooth sumptuousness of its blooming, this skinny, vertical sentinel with a presence defying all imagination: who could ever have anticipated such extravagance of color? The Lake is in a way its opposite, drawing as it does on the experience of children playing in inlets, oblivious of the sun as they spend an entire afternoon pondering a puddle of seawater with its seaweed and shells, tasting salt on a fingertip, lost in a vibrant microcosm; this scaled-down universe, harsh yet infinitely, sensually subtle in all its blue, brown, green and violet splendor, so dazzlingly hot, so rough to the touch. And the remaining image, First Colonizers, is worth long autumn forays in the undergrowth, long enough to revivify those tales in which we lose ourselves. It speaks to us of coolness, silence, mysterious crackings, animals passing unseen, odors of humus. Within reach are tufts of yellowed grass, twigs, bark, sparkles of light on the precious green of moist moss; and the knots and grooves of this slanting log, of wood doomed to decay and bedecked inedible fungi, with patterns - commas, parentheses, successions of dots - all bright gold, chrome yellow, saffron. Try reading "Délíce des Forêts" at the end of Jean-Louis Schefer's latest *Main Courante*⁴ - or John Cage's *Book of Mushrooms*⁵. Four Details, then: four full seasons in their own right.

In the black of night few lights are visible, but in Ho Chi Minh City a smiles glow on every face, in a calm celebration of Independence. April 30, 1995: the witness is an American, standing at the edge of the circling motorcycles and their endless succession of bodies rejoicing in their freedom. People crowding in, all here by some unspoken agreement, whole families on their mopeds; most families have one and everybody's on board, in leisurely orbit around a square dimly lit by TV projectors and neon signs; it's as if they were under the low ceiling of a fairground carousel. The man - husband, fiancé, big brother - drives, the woman holding him by the waist; often there's a child sitting in front, maybe even another between the parents, the women have smiling mouths and eyes, their bright faces turned in the same direction as all join together in a decorous celebration of their independence. Reminiscent of Robert Frank, Ed Grazda is the author of two books on Afghanistan and creator of the splendid maquette *Asia Calling*, which brings together some of the images behind this photomontage. Grazda has been honing his art via a technique of assemblage that is not so much a midpoint between book and exhibition as way of extending each image to the detriment of none of them. In so doing he invents and thoroughly justifies a subtle rapprochement, a sequence whose relevance and staying

power reveal just how, drawing on the lessons of his elders, he has continued to advance down his own road. "That's what interests me: using images to make the equivalent of a literary work, to make rhythms, a visual continuity, a secret lyrical structure streaming along beneath the actual images... In part my idea is to convey the feeling of what these countries are at the present time, the feeling of the weird juxtaposition of Coca-Cola, ads, mopeds and, you know, fighting cocks. There's a whole mixture going so fast, changing, it's got nothing to do with Hong Kong or Bangkok, but it's as if all these cultures were overlapping.⁶" Just how does this New Yorker come to feel such a longstanding fraternity with people from the other side of the world, such powerful ties with the Afghan community? What explains the ease he brings to living in Asia, his ability to see, receive and hand on, the clarity of the gaze he turns on people living at the opposite pole from himself? The answer is that a part of him is over there. We were quick to talk about Frederick Prokosch's *The Asiatics* and last summer I had the pleasure of introducing him to Nicolas Bouvier's *The Way of the World*, with its "I shall be gone and live or stay and die." In his Chelsea studio, its walls covered with pictures taken so far away, he is still back there with his friends, still in the midst of an ongoing history he has partially shared. These relationships underlie part of an identity broadened by the images he has created of these friends and passed on to us. This man of few words is the go-between, telling of them and the emotion of this festive evening when all smile the same smile, a flash of light cutting through the darkness.

The cyclists melt into the texture of the wood; the scuba divers and their buoys scarcely break the still surface of the water. Behind the curtain of oak, thicket and slim tree-trunks, in a patch of unfiltered daylight, we glimpse the red/white/blue of the jerseys, the features of men who have taken cover, some of them seated, their bicycles in the undergrowth. The scene is barely decipherable amid the fluttering of the small leaves, the dancing light, the complex, fragmented interplay of color and shadow - these involuntary reminders of Renoir's *Bal au Moulin de la Galette* or Monet's jubilant *Rue Montorgueuil*. Divers can be guessed at just below the surface, one of them a darker patch breaking the flatness under a uniform sky. In both cases these pictures suggest no more than some tranquil, all-absorbing group activity, a few hours on the weekend. Xavier Ribas makes us privy to this absorption and its resources it calls for, limited perhaps but perfectly sufficient for those involved. This documentary photographer-anthropologist, who has also worked with architects and town planners, contemplates the outlying spots city people choose for their weekend leisure: nondescript places, neither suburbs nor countryside, wastelands and vacant lots, improvised beaches without sand or dunes. Their occupants are mere silhouettes, lost in the "utter relaxation" evoked by the title of the series. Beginning with simple observation of people whose points of reference he shared, Ribas came to realize that some of his pictures contained a something else, an implicit inclusion of economic and cultural data together with references drawn from the history of art and photography; here we find both Lewis Balz and the *Voyage to Cythera*. "According to Balz, these spaces out on the margin are just the right places for experiencing an absence of the order and the social constraints we feel elsewhere... Like Watteau's island of Cythera, the land on the periphery of our cities is the superfluous place - superfluous in terms of basic necessities - where people can undertake such inconsequential recreations as strolling, reading or picnicking, for the pure pleasure they bring and free of all outside intervention... It's clear to me that this improvisation reflects personal choice rather more than chance; so it's possible that people's interest in such peripheral areas is due to the fact that they see them as places of freedom. Or to put it another way, the fact that freedom can only come in a left-over space and for this reason presents an image of desolation."⁷ These kinds of leisure activity may go back a hundred years; and seen from the outside in the all-too-familiar way they seem to have kept all the dignity of the country outing. A fundamental aspect of this approach finds expression in the title of a recent Ribas exhibition, *Near and Elsewhere*.

Three prisoners just released are waiting for the bus: one shows his profile, another only the back of his neck, while the most readily identifiable, standing between the other two, is seen from behind. Cropped hair, heavy build, tattoos on the arms: it's this man's size that strikes home in a picture whose sheer force provides the sole physical impact of Jérôme Brézillon's report on Huntsville, Texas. In the course of his travels the photographer kept on the move, varied his angles and tried - sometimes successfully - to catch what he was not supposed to photograph. This assignment - later partially used in the press and a documentary film - was his own idea entirely; here he is covering ground already well trodden by American photographers, yet he treats the subject in terms of a specificity approached without preconceptions, avoiding all mythmaking, moralizing, prettification and sensationalism. He may have had his own reactions, but we don't see them here: we see only the thrust and professionalism, the mix of intuition and rigorousness, and an intelligence that guarantees the honesty of his vision. Brézillon works as a reporter for the Métis Agency; in the normal course of his portrait work he doesn't go in close, preferring to leave a breathing space and stressing the relationship between the subject and his setting. Here the life of a city where the State's executions are carried out and nearly a third of the population lives off the prison system is looked at from an essentially peripheral point of view, the single, remarkable exception being the first photograph, with its closing of the gap between photographer and photographed. A decision that is perfectly justified when we consider those who are released and finally go their way; this man pushing a platoon of trolleys or hanging about on the supermarket parking lot, a perfectly normal scene except in this city of eight prisons; this deserted street, sinister in the

post-Halloween rain; the white-uniformed convicts of Inside Holiday Unit, treading the vast straightness of paths under an even vaster sky; this room lit by a narrow, barred window where dominoes are played under the naive portrait of a 19th-century criminal; and Peckerwood Hill, where the grave markers are got ready for those condemned to death. These six pictures, among others, speak with eloquent restraint of an America where time goes by, in spite of everything.

A running dog springing right at you, or maybe a hippopotamus besieged by colored bubbles, a white rabbit splashed with (fake) blood or, to round things off, a hen glaring at you out of its single eye. Larry Gianettino's Close Friends come bursting back in just when we thought we could get by without them. Coming on heavy with all their close-up visual flashiness, these little critters to collect or stick on a pencil-end have been catapulted into the role of models for photographic portraits. Just a few centimeters high and made of plastic, porcelain, plush or fabric, they are caught against a backdrop meticulously chosen to set them off and turn them into personalities - heroes even. Perfect anime material - like Chilly Willy, the penguin with a glove on his head, Nick Park's sheep or even the Muppets - or, if you like, the product of stories for slightly naughty children. Here we have a whole crowd of unexpected personalities, eccentric in terms of their affect potential and frozen individuality, but now unarguably real. The idea came from Gianettino himself, ready to spend hours sifting through store tubs until he found the perfectly photogenic lamb, kitten, duck or polar bear he needed. And it brought results. "It meant experimenting, looking at things in an obscure, totally special way, peering down the wrong end of the telescope. When I started working with these toys I realized I was getting something different right away, so I threw myself into it.. I've been taking photos since I was 13 - I was 44 last May, but I still have the feeling of being 13! - and over the years I've been through a whole range of photographic changes. The ironic thing is that it was this series of off the cuff photos that brought me the most recognition. Since then I've started another, completely different project and I keep on experimenting; but I still have ideas for these toys in the back of my mind and I'll get back to them - they haven't finished with me yet.⁸" Along the way Gianettino looked back at cinema history via his own genre movies: horror (Psychotic Duck, 1998), adventure (Gorilla Monster, 1997), fantasy (Alien Creature with Blue Eyes, 1999) and - he's got to be a Vince Minelli fan - the musical (Donkey, 1998). "I've been told some people find this kind of thing unnerving. But if these images are disturbing or scary it's because they're meant to be. It's amazing to see just how ordinary toys can get totally unexpected reactions from adults. Maybe it's because we've lost our ability to play and use our imagination. Taken out of the childhood context toys can be full of memories - and not just happy ones." And so the cruel rabbit is as scary as any murderer, the hippo makes your heart melt and the ambiguous hen is spooky. The big boy who runs the show spares no effort for his "little friends" and they return the favor, with perfect simulations of terror, innocence, confusion, joy and so on. The success of the venture reflects their innate talent, which he so skillfully brings out. Whatever the place and time - across Russia during a winter, or years and years of a house in Austria, lived in by a father and his son - lives are many and death always the same. But as a counterpoint to the despair, the abyss of unhappiness Luc Delahaye has seen people plunge into, or to the ineluctable passing of time after the death of Seichi Furuya's wife - time made visible in the Berlin sky, in the withdrawal of his son Komyo Klaus and in the wheeling of the cosmos - comes the vast, placatory sky of Jean-Louis Garnell's Night, or one of those Phenomena in all their pure miraculously.

Sitting on her bed, Tania looks you in the eye; how old is she, with that look of utter disillusionment? In late 1998 and early 1999, Luc Delahaye made a winter journey' through Russia, immersing himself totally in the everyday life of a changing, changeless country. The photographic outcome falls somewhere between his work as a war reporter and his parallel enterprise of the last few years, the 'documentary' portraits and the publication of several books. The last of them, Winterreise, owes something to these earlier preoccupations, but there is more to it than that. Luc speaks of his "enormous photographic greed, unhampered by self-censorship and guided purely by reality.. . My journey wasn't just a succession of harsh scenes, I also wanted to convey the inherent sadness I felt in the country at that time... I've always sought - forced myself - to approach my work as a form of asceticism, an esthetic stance. Yet at the same time I'm drawn to the very opposite. These two poles can be felt in Winterreise, in which I'm a kind of recording machine and at the same time trying to change my way of looking, draw more on color...⁹" These are photographs that could have been shaped by a guiding principle, an unconcealed contrast between tones, between pure and adulterated colors, underpinned by the manifest mastery of light, whatever its source, and of framing, and ultimately by the sheer power of the subject. The result is Genia after the Injection and the three adolescents of Psychiatric Hospital no. 1 in Perm; and, with a little more distance, the sullen-looking young woman of Krasnoyarsk, or Luda, Luda visible only as a toppled body just as the anonymous drinker of Novosibirsk is visible only as a gesture. In other images the tramstop in Prokopievsk becomes blue night filtered through condensation, and the discolored wallpaper in the Mariinsk prison a ravaged, yet nostalgia-filled forest of birches. Portraits of three generations, different social levels and two settings - indoor and outdoor - generate enormous tension and distress. The children look into the camera stripped of all illusions, the old gaze out absently and eyes of the young adults are defiant or addled with drugs. Missing from this too brief choice are other images providing a true overview: miners petrified with cold, a small boy who sleeps wherever he

can, a mugging at night, a restaurant decorated as if for Christmas, dirty snow seen through a window, an old man with magnificent eyes. Thanks to Luc Delahaye, each of them exists and we know it. Now they are closer to us, thanks to this man who set off to find out, who hung on stubbornly and then went back for more, addressing different issues and different people and bearing witness differently from his earlier Portraits, Mémo and L'Autre. This changes nothing in the lives of these people, this is still just "a work about Russia" - the eternal problem of being at one remove. "Given this proud, passionate nation, given a people that has always known suffering, always been condemned to living underground, yet can still look lucidly at itself in all the drunkenness of its humiliation / Given the photographer, who so carefully adjusts the level of his indifference, impatiently awaits a slight shock to the eye / Given the territory, a grotesque empire, a monotonous, near-empty expanse...**10**" But Luc has the gift, and the people he has photographed are truly there. All these lives, as unrewarding, unpredictable - or all too predictable - as they may be. And the mere image of those birches is so striking, a visible expression of what is, of what has happened independently of human will, of the outcome of time and circumstance; it is a summary of a reality that is part of our time, of the history that rules the lives of people in this country so close to our own.

Everything disappears: the ground, the grit, the dark, irregular patches -everything disappears into the obscure depths. In the late 1980s Jean-Louis Garnell produced the pictures making up Disorders, complex, object-saturated images immediately exhibited, reproduced and widely seen, and which generated many more like themselves among younger photographers. They were followed by differently constructed, less cluttered images marked by subtler handling of their components, notably in his Suites. Dense and increasingly rich, his work branched out experimentally in different directions, the most recent outcome being what he calls his Phenomena. At the same time as Disorders, he was working on Nights, images made of very little and just as important, even if less shown - released ahead of their time, perhaps? Their sister-images were Seas, reminiscent of Sugimoto's triumphs. These are end-images: beyond is the abyss - or the depths of the mystery that is interstellar space. A little texture, a few pebbles, a sublimely austere gamut of tinted grays, darkness that inspires no fear - this could be another planet where day is unknown. And beyond, nothing? The impression is less that of a void than of peacefulness. "Maybe after images like those of Nights you just stop. You can draw, do something else, maybe write. It's a sort of end of the world. What can there be that is less than a patch of ground disappearing into darkness? Yet at the same time this nothing-much is very down to earth. This is no view of the sky, of clouds floating by - nothing vague at all. Just the perfect clarity of pebbles vanishing into darkness. So a statement is being made, even if the circumstances are tough: it's nighttime, the light is awful and the exposure time is fifteen or twenty minutes... Then along comes the sea and all of a sudden everything opens up. And images are still possible. At a time like this you can photograph anything you like: a mountain, birds, people, an interior. Everything is possible.**11**" Years later, yes, down comes the rain, as good as a poem by Francis Ponge.**12** Images like this put order back into things: nothing's stopped, time flows along, the days pass; these are the everyday, observable Phenomena, nothing exceptional about them, nothing except very exceptional events - nothing but life itself, infinitely.

Christine's face emerges out of the bubbles of her bath. What happened to Seiichi Furuya is only a personal drama: a death - that of his wife after seven years of married life - that has since shaped his life, that of his son, and his work as a photographer. He met Christine Gössler in Graz in the late 70s, married her a year later and had a son with her. Almost - every day he photographed her - a young, beautiful, lively woman, a model, muse, lover and mother - until her illness drove her to take her own life. It took Furuya several years to make a book and an exhibition - Memories 1978-1985 - out of his photographs of her, then another of each under the title Mémoires 1995 (Scalo), combining portraits and other images in color and black and white. And it was practically ten years before he was able to say to me, last summer, that he felt ready to print the pictures he had never stopped taking but had kept for himself; he was ready, too, to show them, having partially worked through his grief. Four books on Christine Furuya-Gössler have been published, three of them after her death. The miraculous thing about them is their total lack of morbidity and, even more so, the fact that the pictures don't repeat themselves, don't give any impression of coming to the end their subject: each volume offers different sets images and changes in approach and tone. As if, indeed, the subject were inexhaustible; as if, even in death, this deeply-loved woman were inexhaustible enough to keep her autonomy, to surprise endlessly with fresh facets of herself; as if Furuya had loved her - still loves her - enough to keep her alive for ever. "A little after noon on 7 October 1985, on the 36th anniversary of the creation of the German Democratic Republic... Christine jumped from the 9th floor of our apartmentblock. I found myself faced with the abrupt end of my business of "documenting the life of a living being".. People whose lives are halted by a death keep on existing because they have already been alive. Since my return to Graz in the summer of 1987 my mother-in-law and I have continued to live under the same roof. The three of us - Christine being for us a kind of hidden axis - pursue our lives around this existence.. The two Memories books were created as a photographic coalescence of the proofs of the life I had lived with Christine, but they are also resonant with my wish to see Komyo read them one day. They were made with the idea that what I cannot say and what Komyo does not want to know, absolutely has to come out. The more you blow on a fire to extinguish it, the brighter burns the flame. If you stop blowing, the cold blue becomes light red. Why did I try so hard to put out a fire so

scorchingly gentle?.. She's been dead for almost eleven years. The seven years we spent together came to an end such a long time ago. It's mysterious, but since her death our relationship has become deeper and deeper. And now, working on these records again, I rediscover her every day.**13**" Furthermore, in his post-Christine existence, Furuya has remained the same photographer as when he was with her: his images have lost nothing of their earlier quality and the story they tell, the perception of the world and its ways, remains the same. The eggs photographed in the Vienna Museum of Natural History are still in some way imbued with Christine's illness, the Berlin sky still speaks of her suicide - but something else is present as well, something evoked by the slowworm in the lush grass and the vivid green of the vegetable garden. With his sensitivity to everybody and everything around him, Furuya has the gift of seizing both the moment and the passing of time: in the fall of fruit, a cat soaking up warmth, the changelessness of a starfish in a Venice aquarium overprinted with a patch of sky. This, then, is a photography of the cycle of life, death and rebirth. The world we live in generates close virtual or other links with fiction, links we can see as welcome breaks. Jan Svenungsson draws on a novel and the life of another artist, crisscrossing them with his own life to produce a new type of work. Jörg Sasse takes images created by others then abandoned sight unseen, reworking them with a computer to produce new images, new stories; Eric Rondepierre fits an entire film - and multiple questions - into a single image; Romeo Alaeff works by association, using a tight rapprochement of successive views to engender something totally different, in a kind of discreet, displaced surrealism.

No one can identify a floating body. Jan Svenungsson, as fate would have it, became a passionate admirer of Giorgio de Chirico and especially of the short novel *Hebdomeros* the painter wrote in 1929. In 1995 Jan visited Volo, in Greece, de Chirico's birthplace in 1888 and the family home until they moved to Italy. In Volo the young Swede took photographs, tramping through the port area and getting to know the surrounding hills, the empty houses, the former orphanage, the cement works, a boat cast up on the shore, the tables in the arbor of an empty cafe... On his return home he undertook a translation of the novel from the French, which he speaks fluently, into Swedish; then, in a gallery in his home town of Lund, he put on an exhibition in the form of 108 works comprising pictures and handwritten text. Non-readers of Swedish can fall back on the original French or the English translation,**14** and will notice the deliberate coincidences and connection between image and text which - like the synchronization of sound and image in a film - have become the underlying mechanism of the project. The fact that Jan's language - and so each sentence he has written - is foreign to us, is a neat reminder of his own relationship to the original (also of de Chirico's situation when he arrived in France 1911). He also provides this second *Hebdomeros* with an additional mystery, the secret of the links between text image remaining closed to us. Some of the photographs, in fact, contain their own enigmas. Who, for example, decided on the line that divides this view of the cemetery in two, whitening everything beneath it: crosses, grave marker whitewashed tree-trunks? What is the point of this strict demarcation? And then there is the other line, the one that cuts straight through the impenetrable brush of the mountainside: this is the route of the railway line as laid down by de Chirico's engineer father. And the swimmer, if that's what it is: who can really pick him out up against the rocks, this brief eddy vanishing as quickly as it appears? And is he swimming or drowning? And how does this rectangular wall come to make such a perfect screen for the projection of the slender shadows of the cypresses, as lasting as eternity? Jan, who worked as Juliet Man Ray's assistant in the Rue Férou and who suddenly went off to see the Casa Malaparte on Capri, has a special relationship with places. By turns painter, photographer, sculptor, engraver and creator of installations and texts, his main - and craziest - venture in recent years has been the building of tall, round, red brick chimneys in the most unlikely places; straight out of metaphysical paintings, they stand on sites where their sole justification is that of being his own unique course of action. The sixth of them is currently going up near Münster; but since 1992, from Stockholm to Vienna to Korea, they have been popping up like a succession of question - or exclamation - marks.

This bridge in the mountains: what purpose can it possibly serve - and does it actually exist? Jörg Sasse has taken very few actual photographs since his *Curtains* series of 1993, basing his work over the past few years on found images or pictures given to him, and reworking them with a computer. "In fact, what these photos were originally supposed to be - what was there when the shutter clicked - can't be seen in my pictures. What interests me is not the original intention, but the photo itself. This is why most of my working collection is made up of amateur photos whose subject is not obviously personal or which include chance details."**15** Sasse turns these abandoned photographs into images: a murder scene that could have come from a colorized version of Adolfas Mekas' *Hallelujah the Hills*, canoes washed up like whales at the water's edge, a house whose roof is too red. And what of this couple caught in a blurred foreground? I don't know - and I'm not sure I want to know - exactly how these three images were - tinkered with (usually he changes certain elements, reducing or increasing their size, displacing or eliminating them, or else he diminishes or reinforces the level of contrast). Often his intervention gives rise to images that are cold, textureless, somewhat disembodied, yet they can also generate a kind of depth, the intimation of a potential event: something could happen, or has just happened, there's an implicit content that holds the attention, that fascinates or at least sets us wondering. We come to understand, then, why Sasse stresses his concern with the overall tone of his images, explaining that in the (as yet unwritten) history of color photography, visual atmosphere has changed from one era to another. In this

way he establishes a fundamental relationship between a photograph's colors and the period it dates from. Thus he accords at least as much attention to the images collated in his archives as to the changes he effects; he thinks about the people who created them, these fleeting, shadowy presences without which... Yet no one will ever discover the use of this bridge spanning the middle of nowhere; and while at a distance we may sense the wind that bends this whitish grass, and closer up become lost amid the scattering of red and green specks, there can be no imagining any before or after. The final image, with its swimming pool and silvery car, its palms and the light glowing within the black house, irresistibly evokes the unnerving suspense of a Hitchcock-style film of the late 1950s.

The faces in this Crowd: we do not know who they are, nor when, nor where. What are we seeing?

Already known for his earlier *Précis de Décomposition*, with Moires Eric Rondepierre took a fresh direction in his artistic - and literary - output. The Diptyka series - "the outcome of research in the Greek archives in 1998, undertaken at the instigation of the French Institute in Salonika"**16** - later became an exhibition of twelve images; this was a real break with the past and a new beginning, notably in its shift from the backward-looking black and white of old films to color. "Imagine the upper and lower halves of two consecutive film photograms, complementing one another in such a way that top of the lower image is placed at the bottom and the bottom of the upper image is placed at the top... This arrangement involves no manual inversion: I focus on the middle of the two images in such a way that the lower one is divided at exactly the same point as the higher one... Although the image is fragmented - divided up differently by this act of separation - the visual outcome has nothing to do with cropping: the image is complete, with no leftovers. There are no leftovers in quantitative terms but there are changes in terms of the image as such, of its content and visual aspect. It is the nature of these changes that determines my choice. (This approach only functions) when it acts on the image, awakens it, introduces a perception not existing in the original, non-divided version. It's this gap that is disturbing - or rather the effect it has: there are now two spaces, almost two worlds, where previously there was only one... The dark band defining the division plays a significant part in the formal, visual relationships between the two parts. Its width changes according to the technique and the film size... But whatever the case, it's the band that separates and connects and binds the images making up this new whole. What interests me in addition to the perceptual shift between top and bottom is that the eye no longer sees two images, or two images caught up in an inversion, but a new, singular image, a single visual enigma that engenders an ocular oscillation, a hesitation."**17**" After we had chosen three Diptyka - Apparatuses, The Flood and Meeting - Eric called me up one day to show me a single image. And we kept it. He probably doesn't know himself where this Crowd came from, what film it belongs to; some film he has never seen. Neither do we, and it doesn't matter in the least. This is even just the yardstick we need for measuring the value of the image, partially resulting as it does from a highly specific relationship with the cinema. Making your own deductions from the scanty information provided, you might easily feel that the whole film is summed up in this photograph: it's cold if you go by the clothing and the other visible odds and ends, but the vital thing is the faces, women's faces, some of them very serious as if waiting for something. The stern face of a man in the mid-ground. The gesture by two young women, raising their hands face-high as if to protest, to protect themselves, one of them with eyes half-closed, the other sublimely tense. There is, too, the sheer breadth of the composition, the variations on black and brown, on neutral beige and gray cut through by bright green and dull red, with here and there a touch of gold and pure white. In the midst of this nameless torment appears a woman, separated from the others by an inviolable thread of black; unlike some of the others nearby, looking elsewhere or dropping their gaze, she fully embodies herself, pulls us into the crowd, stands firm - as does the entire image, the scene, the process itself in all its unforgettability. In its incredible economy this photograph owes its essence to the cinema; and it pays tribute to its source in its own inspired synthesis.

As we look out of the plane, the city seems visible through the porthole: pure illusion. Romeo Alaëff makes music and videos, and Plane is the first of his photos I ever saw: it was already there in his East Village studio in New York close on six years ago, and he has it still, after the move to Brooklyn. What interests him is often the process of creation of a work, the idea at least as much as the formal result; whence the ambiguity of a dual image in which we confuse the porthole on the right and, on the left, the city as we think we see it from a plane in flight. In his Consecutive series Romeo works with the deliberate juxtaposition of two successive views to create a disturbing whole, the images being visually related or not, in different modes or not, complementary or conflicting, totally unexpected, etc. He reminds us that while we may be brother and sister, we do not choose our family. Free association, the unexpected, the melancholic and the zany are the key to some of these dual images, while others make it clear that the aspects of reality shown do not have to be far removed from each other: in their very ordinariness they can readily generate a kind of poetry. Could the girl in thong sandals be perched in the tree under the summer sky? Couldn't the rows of plastic chairs be on a riverboat coming down the Seine or a canal in Amsterdam? His family, himself, the place he lives in, his travels and his profession as an artist - still in the throes of taking shape - nourish these images taken with a plastic camera, one after another on the same film, to be developed and used strictly in the order in which they were taken. In isolation these are pretty much simple images brought together to express something the artist did not initially know. The sole exception is the highly complex *Revolving Door*, based on a pivot, a mechanism -

but also a dynamics - in its own right: people enter, people leave, but there remains a reference to the line of demarcation used in the dual images and at the same time to later, not yet fully realized works in which, as here, everything hinges on the same question, the same fragmentation of what we think of as the unbroken spectacle provided by our eyes. But Romeo ended up by dropping the titles we had used for his photographs for months and months - Flip Flop Tree, Water Chairs, Horse when a common element was enough to designate them, or Revolving Door, another title drawn from Man Ray. And here we find that endless interplay of automatism, the waking dream, the Surrealist aura so skillfully, so delightfully renewed for our own time. Yet images do not have to make a point or tell a story to provide a potentially charged vision of reality that helps, transforms, elevates. Steve McQueen's Barrages are made of that wretched object we've all seen a thousand times without taking the slightest notice; yet he singles it out, lays it bare and fills it with a far broader resonance, transmuting it into a subject whose strangeness renders it indispensable. Maarten Vanden Abeele, in his encounters with people, places, animals and even things, portrays them all as living creatures. Marc Trivier is listening to a harsher, more biting music, while Jean-Luc Mylane, homing in on his familiar bird, offers the eye a momentary miracle of contemplation: in each case a different revelation.

Who actually sees these bits of tied-up fabric lying in the Paris gutters, supposedly there to direct the flow of the water? Steve McQueen isn't the only one to have observed them, yet he was certainly the first to have taken them as a theme, with the fifty photographs taken in 1998 of what he calls "street sculptures". For these images, collected in a small book and exhibited several times, McQueen has found exactly the right form and format, not seeking to idealize inappropriately for fear of deforming his subject. He speaks appreciatively of David Hammons, "the most generous artist I know. He taught me to control my work, how much to work, and to do only what was necessary.¹⁸" Just as he appropriated a famous shot - the absolute image of a Buster Keaton film - with his excellent Dead Pan, McQueen takes the Barrage motif as an umbrella title, adding a number for each image. This is not reporting, but McQueen has undeniably found a way of revealing something all of us have seen while walking in the street, without realizing or remembering it. Having found the means of approach, he passes it on to us; an approach marked by delicacy, by the subtleness and depth also to be found in films marked by brute force or, in the case of Exodus, an ethereal sensibility. Curiously, the book Barrage quotes entries from a bilingual dictionary, playing on the word's different meanings in French: dam, barrage, barricade, roadblock. Some of the objects shown here look like hunched bodies or abandoned, isolated silhouettes. But not all: others - tightly rolled, pragmatically submitting to their preordained function, channeling the water from sidewalk fireplugs - offer textures, a formal rigor and an absence of pathos that take them into the realm of abstraction. Around them are the colors of the street: asphalt, a block of stone, metal plates, stagnant water. One of these objects, dark gray in color, blocks a drain; another seems borne along by the rush of water along the gutter; a third is simply a soaked, abandoned garment in a sea of shimmering green. One is meticulously put in place, some are soiled, one is tawny against a gray background, its white heart bared to us. The very word 'barrage' conjures up visions of a clear break, an event in the life of the city; but for whom, given that we are not there? Unless, from now on...

This man waiting for the very last train in the station in Farina. What exactly is he waiting for? Maarten Vanden Abeele began by focusing on the theatre and its people, capturing the work of choreographer Pina Bausch in dark, grainy images that brought all the intensity of her vision to her devotees and those who had yet to discover her. Then, imperceptibly, he moved out into life, initially the lives of his friends and those nearest and dearest to him, most of them dancers, actors, performers, musicians whose bodies, energy and passion he could so readily respond to visually: life in the wings, shared accommodation, overnight rooms, planes, corridors... His second book is devoted to Jan Lauwers' Needcompany on tour, but observed exclusively off-stage in alternations of warm, slightly acid, saturated color and the same stippled black and white as before. Some of the images on show here are drawn from this journey during which Maarten broadens his scope to include both the familiar and the merely glimpsed. Everything is here: green neon seen through a broken window, a pedestrian with his eyes closed, a streetcorner in Chinatown, blue-clad football players on a grubby, dusty patch of ground. A monkey lost in thought and wearing an incredibly human expression is just one of the many he has photographed in the zoos of all the cities he has visited. The picture of Carlotta is full of a disturbing violence we do not immediately recognize as staged and which jolts us as much as if it were real. This inquiring artist is curious about the ordering of his photographs, about the meaning they can suddenly take on or have always possessed. "Creating an image is also finding an image. There's something almost physical about it. Over the years you develop, among other things, an ability to actually handle images; this happens pretty much intuitively and the outcome is a near-abstract kind of knowledge I liken to what's called "clustering" in the scientific field. This has to do with sensing an entity intuitively.¹⁹" What counts for Maarten is the ground he has covered in just a few short years, the long journey still before him and a temperament marked by ambition, rigorousness, a certain susceptibility, a sense of solidarity and a craving for adventure and intensity. All this together with a fragility expressed in moments where the only important thing is to call a halt and not exhibit for a while. This perhaps reflects the schizophrenic lifestyle of most of the people he mixes with, on stage and in the city, two utterly different time frames and modes of visibility. He will go far, that much is certain, and not the least of his qualities is that he knows how to take his time and do things his way, observing

ceaselessly as he goes along: those enigmatic bags holding down a silver plastic sheet (Reverse), Liège with its frail roadside trees trembling on the verge of ignition in the blaze of the headlights. Or the sheer marvel that is October Song, late one night in the apartment where Franck and his companion live: Maarten finds them as we see them, naked, magnificent, beaming with happiness. Franck is laughing as his girlfriend hides herself against him in the warm light of a single lamp; they drink a little sake, two people who know each other by heart. What does it matter how long this extended sequence lasts: the important things are the freshness and modesty of an intimacy that loses nothing for being contemplated, this fulfillment free of all tenseness and suffering, this image of desire and pleasure so immediately perceptible. Happiness, and that's all. Not just tenderness and affection, not just eroticism and sensuality, but the image as well, a stunningly serene image - I know none other like it - of love.

How to explain this dark line slicing through a vivid field of colza? Portraits from asylums, slaughterhouses and the countryside, square and rectangular images - some highcontrast, some solarized - in which light is all, a field of flax, a watchtower, a doomed, blindfolded animal, a roof like the back of some inunense creature, a clearing overhung with blinding whiteness; always and ever the same. Like the portraits of trees, of artists and writers, of the Wolf Child, the photograph of Milena at the window, set against the ultimate brightness of Sils Maria, in what was long Marc Trivier's most recent image. Beginning with the catalogue of his 1988 exhibition at Denain and Lausanne, he opted for an accumulation of (his own) torn pictures, refusing to treat them as inviolable works, keeping his distance and taking care to avoid all artistic posing. He lives in seclusion, takes care of a forest and of Kafka, his daughter's stallion. His relationship with his surroundings, especially the natural environment, is fundamental to him, nourishing a part of his photography as it was once nourished by his occupation - back when he would set off to capture Borges in Buenos Aires, Genet in Rabat, Michel Foucault, Michel Leiris, Samuel Beckett and Paule Thévenin in Paris, in portraits as closely-observed and brutally confrontational as those of the propped-up tree in Folkestone, the spread carcasses, the blinded pig. Then came timeless, fable-like pictures, like that of his daughter on a pathway holding Flowers for Comrade Andrei Platonov. I have met Marc only a couple of times, the first at his home one cold spring, the second also up there, but in summer, walking past a field of foxglove to the gingko plantation. But there are, too, his letters and the texts he has written and recited to me, words - like his images - as basic as you could ever expect to hear. "I had no intention of doing what I've done - what some people consider a "body of work". I don't see it that way myself. You asked me what, in my opinion, generates this so-called "creative" work.. and my answer is the urgent need to devise a system (in the sense that language is a system) so private that other people can only gain access by accepting the codes and decipherments you impose as barriers between something flickeringly perceptible inside you and that "outside" where "they" judge you and "they" tear at you... To be truthful the images I've made are without meaning... If what I've produced in the way of photographs has something to do with a "tragic" vision of existence, it's only in relation to the dreary, emasculated mendacity that underpins the sheer visual imbecility of advertising: the "don't worry, be happy" approach, as if happiness was something other than a luminous memory or a project endlessly put off until later.**20**" After The Watchtower, last winter brought Paradise Lost, "a few orange-tree trunks, two shadows, the light biting into the gelatin and in the distance the real "light"... an incredible feeling of nostalgia.**21**" His latest landscapes lay down a frontier, an extreme photographic experience shot through with intensity, tension and fullness, revolt and wisdom, a consciousness of human finitude together with proof of an existence meant to be shared: a gift of fabulous gravity, harshly unique - and exactly right.

Spot the birdie, then come closer: in fact there are several of them, reflected in the water and in amongst the red grass. While this distinctive work by Jean-Luc Mylayne, a montage of several photographs in a single image, plays on reduplication, inversion and reflection as a basic axis, its purely formal aspect quickly recedes into second place. There are the still waters, caught between shadow and the clear sky mirrored in them, the intensity of the red vegetation with its suggestions of earth and fire, and the bird - the two birds, together with their doubles, their reflections, on each of the square photographs. So there must be sixteen of them, not two; the issue is one not of arithmetic, however, but of slight confusion, of splendid illusion. The bird that has no part to play, that serves no purpose, is there before our eyes. The work of Jean-Luc Mylayne sets out to alert us to this split second of total, extreme perception of matter, air and time. "We are probably the first kairiciforms. Life evolves in at least four dimensions of which one - time -remains inexactly conceptualized. Human beings have a specific relationship to this dimension and as a result are isolated in a paradoxal ambiguity: a dizzying, exhilarating acuteness of perception confronted with an insidious otherness.**22**" The bird embodies this split in a totally natural way, and remains absolutely free. I've been told, and there seems no reason to doubt it, that wherever Jean-Luc Mylayne appears the birds flock around him; but there's no otherworldliness here - at most a St Francis with definitely no halo. He meets them individually, respecting their individual intelligence and, in the course of the days and weeks of an entire season, produces with them the sought-for image in which each has his rightful place; but best of all, he gets no more out of it than that, leaving them their freedom without catching or capturing them. Each image takes months, but in fact is the work of a lifetime - at least. In his known photographs, those that have been exhibited and reproduced, we see familiar birds, everyday species like the blackbird, the tit and the swallow. A robin looks him in the eye as no

bird has ever looked at us. He has a handful of faithful followers - Brice Curiger, Lynne Cooke, Didier ArnauDET - that in the past also included Louis Calaferte and Lamarche-Vadel. Faced with this image offered for our contemplation, we could spend hours trustingly plunged into its depths, in total harmony with this space opening out through time and where we are welcome as long as we do not frighten the bird away. The bird that has heard us coming, has already seen us, is still there, timidly, offering by his mere presence this image of earthly happiness, of a possible Eden; no more than a bird settled long enough for a shutter to click, a touch of blue and some heaven-sent red that go straight to the heart.

Anne Bertrand

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