

African Cities in Motion

Stéphane Couturier, Safia Benhaïm, Nicolas Boone,
Frédérique Lagny, Ange Leccia, David Yon
CA'ASI, Venice



© Stéphanie Couturier - Alger - Cité «Climat de France» - 2011-2012 - Facade #1

African Cities in Motion CA'ASI, Venice

May 7 - August 30, 2015

On the occasion of the 56th International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale, AS.Architecture-Studio invites Pascale Cassagnau – in charge of the audio visual, video and new media collections at the CNAP – and Françoise Docquier – Deputy Director of the Arts and Sciences Department at Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne University – to exhibit *African Cities in Motion*.

At the CA'ASI, the exhibition continues the discussions initiated by AS.Architecture-Studio on African cities, launched in 2014 with the “Young Architects in Africa” competition.

The *Climat de France* project by Stéphane Couturier, presented by Françoise Docquier, will open this exhibition. A series of photographs and videos filmed on location in Alger in the housing project designed by Fernand Pouillon, this body of work explores the life inherent in modernist collective housing.

A collection of videos supported by the Centre national des arts plastiques complements this exhibition. The films of Nicolas Boone, Safia Benhaïm, Frédérique Lagny, Ange Leccia and David Yon, selected by Pascale Cassagnau, offer a poetic vision of urban Africa today and tomorrow. A bilingual catalog of the exhibition is available.

Curators of the exhibition:

Pascale Cassagnau, in charge of the audio-visual, video and new media collections at the CNAP

Françoise Docquier, Deputy Director of the Arts and Sciences Department at Paris 1 Pantheon- Sorbonne University

Practical information:

CA'ASI – Cannaregio 6024 Campiello Santa Maria Nova
30121 Venezia

May 7, 2015: preview of the exhibition

May 8, 2015: media and professionals event, with a round table with Stéphane Couturier

May 9 - August 30, 2015: exhibition opens to the public

Opening hours: 11:00AM to 6:00PM

Closed on Mondays & Tuesdays.

STÉPHANE COUTURIER

Climat de France

Winner of the Niepce prize in 2003, Stéphane Couturier is a rare artist. For almost twenty years, his aim has been to build a body of work dedicated to representing cities and their transformations. Skillfully, he is plastically part of a contemporary reflection on man's relationship with place and time, endorsing the different mutations of urban space theorized in the 1980s by Paul Virilio and Jean Baudrillard.

His photographs resist all banality, interpretation, and connotations to interruption, sometimes in excess and some strangeness, in the sphere of reality and its news.

In developing his photographs, Stéphane Couturier does not work with any trickery, playing on frontality, color and large format to give more meaning to a symbolic script he weaves in the heart of the cities. The first series – *Archéologies urbaines [Urban Archeologies]*, 1995-1998) and *Monument(s)*, 1999-2002 – have given way to, since the early 2000s, images of residential developments in Mexico and the United States (*Landscaping*, 2001-2004) to an interest in, since 2006, the great architects of the last century: Le Corbusier and India with the series *Melting Point - Chandigarh*, 2006-2007, Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer, with *Brasilia (Melting Point – Brasilia)*, 2007-2010.

As part of the “Marseille 2013” exhibitions, Stéphane Couturier examined the achievements of the second half of the 20th Century in Marseille by architect Fernand Pouillon. He established very quickly a parallel with another housing development by the French architect: in Alger, *Climat de France* is a veritable city constructed in the 1950s above the neighborhood of Bab el Oued. This immense complex which is home to more than 50,000 residents is today a fragmented space: that of growing segregation of urban ghettos, relegation of neighborhoods, poverty and disadvantaged classes.

This new body of work marks both continuity and a break with these last series. A continuity, because it relates to an architectural and urban ensemble, a break, because Stéphane Couturier abandoned photography to embrace videography. A contemporary of his era, the artist could not bring himself to use one medium even if the image in all its forms - static or animated - is only the continuation of a more theoretical reflection on the design of modern cities.

It is a part of this work, previously exhibited at the Hôtel des Arts in Toulon, the Art Center of the General Council of the Var and at the Michel Journiac Gallery, Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne, which is presented at CA'ASI. Forgetting the propriety of the photographic format, Stéphane Couturier has chosen, to enrich his vocabulary, to reproduce the hustle and bustle of the housing development through a single photo running on a long continuous wall supplemented by videos and still images. The artist plays here on the front and back of vibrant façades of this immense modernist housing development.

With this series, Stéphane Couturier encourages and forces us to look at the gaps and unevenness of urban explosion in the 21st century and its peoples, as well as empathizing with the rootlessness of the century.

Françoise Docquier, Deputy Director of the Arts and Sciences Department at Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne University



Alger – Cité « Climat de France » - 2011-2013 – Cour #1
C-Print – 90 x 90 cm



Alger – Cité « Climat de France » - 2011-2012 – Façade #1
C-Print – 90 x 90 cm

The city, the architecture and the urban issue

Screening of films supported by the Centre national des arts plastiques

A contemporary of the invention of the cinema, the modern urban space is made in the style of a film by successive collages, montages and the architecture of light. The city, the architecture and the cinema maintain many cross ratios: metaphorical representations from architectural images to the kinematics of the city. Early cinema, as modern cinema, deals with architecture that is contemporary to the values of modernity. Vectors of a utopia thought to be worldwide, the films *Berlin, Symphonie d'une ville* of Walter Ruttmann, *L'Homme à la caméra* of Dziga Vertov, *Les Hommes le dimanche* of Robert Siodmak, particularly testify to this.

Establishing snippets of cities in the filmic space, contemporary artists have embraced architecture belonging to film and urban space to raise again the issue of, following in the footsteps of particularly Antonioni and Wenders, modernity and its public spaces, identity, subject and ordinary singularity. Urban space is the mirror and the privileged scene to decrypt and record the political turbulence of the present, the collective autobiographies and historical archives.

Pascale Cassagnau, in charge of the audio visual, video and new media collections at the CNAP

Safia Benhaim
CAP TINGIS
2012, 6'



In Tangiers, at the edge of a road, a sign invites you to visit a model apartment in a residence under construction. The poster depicts a man, a virtual resident of the residential complex overlooking the sea. The man is leaning on his balcony looking out. A loud squeaking noise resonates: two children are playing on the swing. The living children and the virtual man look at each other and exchange glances, inhabitants of the same world.

Safia Benhaim
La Fièvre [Fever]
2014, 40'



Filed in Morocco in February 2011 during the revolutionary riots, Safia Benhaim's film is a parallel montage that interweaves the vision of the real scope by a child with a fever crossing a city by car, with the evocation of the return of a political exile to his homeland, caught as a glimpse of a ghost.

The views of the child and the exile's ghost continue to intersect, by bursts of images into a journey through time and the space that also makes today's struggles coincide with the political exile's past. The double story resurrects the history of decolonization and the forgotten struggles illuminating today's new struggles.

Production : Red Shoes
With the support of Image/mouvement from CNAP in 2010

Nicolas Boone
HILLBROW
2014, 32'



Over the past decade, Nicolas Boone has been developing a singular cinematographic work which implements a participatory approach from the perspective of performative cinema. For the filmmaker, the film is primarily a collective adventure engaging in upstream research, featuring the characters in the actions of the theater, which is the film. Insofar as he concentrates on rural areas and explores urban or suburban areas covered during his travels, Nicolas Boone strives to shape fiction that questions stereotypes that represent these various places, by highlighting them.

This was already the subject of previous films, *BUP* or *200%*.

Produced during a residency in South Africa, *Hillbrow* portrays the crossing of a particularly deprived and violent neighborhood in Johannesburg, using fictional characters who perform various actions in the performance mode, by successively passing the baton. Divided into ten scenes, based on stories collected from Hillbrow itself, the film captures the tension between fiction and reality: urban non-places such as the street, supermarket, parking lots and empty land are part of the actions illustrating the inverted portrait of the city and its communities.

Production : Tournage 3000
With the support of Image/mouvement from CNAP in 2013

Frédérique LAGNY
À qui appartiennent les pigeons ? [To whom do the pigeons belong?]
2012, 39'



À qui appartiennent les pigeons ? is the third phase of a series of essays produced in Burkina Faso. It is inspired by the book *The history of the madman*, a novel by the writer and essayist Mongo Beti. The film raises the issue of the construction of cultural identities in West Africa, particularly in Burkina Faso, whose culture is marked by colonialism and rooted in the problems of post-colonial development. Through the portrait of two characters who intersect, the film unveils for the viewer the mirror of two solitudes apprehended through the poetic exercise of the spoken language and sign language. Drawing inspiration from the literature of Mongo Beti and Sony Labou Tansi, the film writing borrows its powers of incarnation and evocation from the sequence-shot, within the space of a theater itself without theater.

With assistance from CNAP for an artistic research in 2011

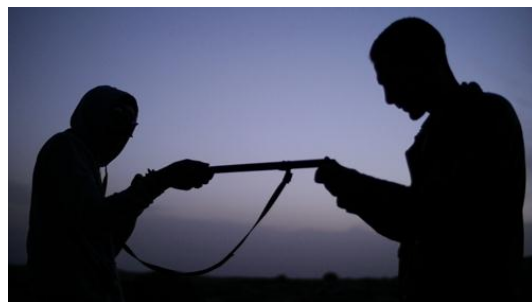
Ange LECCIA
Azé
2004, 70'



Without words, *Azé* highlights extremely dense film material whose sequences filmed in North Africa, are arranged according to a derivation principle: the images and drawings always seem to deviate from their initial trajectory, by repetition, duplication and segmentation. The film invents its own elongated temporal mode, emphasized by sound, made from recorded sounds, noises and music. In turn, the viewer is invited to recompose the entire story that is delivered in a scattered and fragmented manner at the opening of the film.

Production : Camera Lucida
With the support of Image/mouvement from CNAP in 2003

David YON,
La nuit et l'enfant, ou le Songe d'un habitant de Djelfa [The night and the kid, or the Dream of a resident of Djelfa]
2015, 60'



Based on the writings between the philosopher Simone Weil and the Spanish anarchist Antonio Azaña, who was interned in the 1940s in the Algerian town of Djelfa, David Yon's film takes the form of a rhapsodic essay to discuss today all strata of the architectural and human history of Djelfa. It resurrects piecemeal the fragile fragments and erased traces of memory.

Production : Survivance
With the support of Image/mouvement from CNAP in 2012



The Centre national des arts plastiques (CNAP) seeks to support and promote contemporary creative work in all realms of the visual arts. On behalf of the French State, it develops and expands the Fonds national d'art contemporain, a public collection comprised of over 95,000 artworks; it also is responsible for preserving and increasing awareness of this collection both in France and abroad. Further, the CNAP implements a number of forms of financial aid - loans and grants - to support artists and contemporary art professionals. In providing such assistance to these various players, the CNAP becomes a partner to contemporary creative work, contributing to the artistic scene's development and professionalism.

It looks at creative work from the angle of its future, putting its expertise and support to work for the emergence of new artistic forms.

CA'ASI

LA MAISON COMMUNE
D'ARCHITECTURE STUDIO A VENISE

The CA'ASI is a cultural space and association founded by AS.Architecture-Studio in 2009 as a means of promoting contemporary arts and architecture through the organization of exhibitions, seminars, debates or artistic interventions.

This venue, located in Campiello Santa Maria Nova in the heart of Venice, functions like a laboratory dedicated to urban planning, architectural and artistic reflections, open to all those who want to share, dialog and confront their ideas and make professional debate available for the general public.

The CA'ASI benefits from the incredible cultural dynamism and creativity of Venice and strives, through its programming, to echo, enrich and interact with the Architecture and Arts Biennales which bring together, every year, a vibrant, curious and multi-cultural audience.

Since 2010, CA'ASI have hosted the exhibitions *New Chinese Architecture* (2010), *Inside the Cristal Palace* (2011), *Young Arab Architects* (2012), *Construction Ahead* (2013), *Young Architects in Africa* (2014).

.ARCHITECTURE-STUDIO

Founded in Paris in 1973, AS.Architecture-Studio is now based in Paris, Shanghai, Beijing, Saint-Petersburg and Venice and brings together, around 12 partner architects, 200 architects, planners, landscape architects and interior designers of 25 different nationalities. AS.Architecture-Studio defines architecture as «an art involved with society, the construction of mankind's living environment», based on group work and shared knowledge. The ambition to go beyond individuality and to favor dialogue and debate transforms individual knowledge into increased creative potential.

The European Parliament in Strasburg, the Onassis Cultural Centre in Athens, the 2010 World Expo master plan in Shanghai, the National Theatre of Bahrain or the urban design of Montpellier's Marianne district stand among the practice's landmark completions.

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