

tout le monde

Dove Allouche, Lara Almarcegui, William Anastasi, Marcos Avila Forero, Michel Blazy, Marie Cool Fabio Balducci, Melanie Counsell, Marcelline Delbecq, Agnes Denes, Lili Dujourie, Kōji Enokura, Běla Kolářová, Jirí Kovanda, Guillaume Leblon, Jean Le Gac, Gordon Matta-Clark, Helen Mirra, Nicholas Nixon, Gina Pane, Hans Schabus, Mathias Schweizer and Roman Signer.

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Foreword

The art exhibition *tout le monde* is like a roll of traditional film that I have put off developing. I have long known about the content without checking it, and that has given free rein to all sorts of speculation—because to think out an exhibition is to connect one thing to another and translate a world that both escapes us and holds our attention.

The show *tout le monde* is both an apology of our sensory connection to the world and a knowing wink to those who, rightly or wrongly, are convinced that “everybody” can make art. Everybody and anybody indeed ought to be able to develop and maintain a poetic relationship to the world. In the city, there exists a democratic space of expression that is visible to all, where every person can take part in social life and promote their ideas and activities. In a fleeting form of one-upmanship, it is municipal billboards that concentrate political parties, associations, artists and citizens. The moment I especially like is that time when the hoarding turns blue, when all messages are covered over and visual silence descends on the city for a short time. Those mornings in Ivry are indeed my favorite, when the asphalt draws a little closer to the sky. That custom on the scale of the city was the guiding spirit of the show, where the backs of billboards covered in blue coexist with the white gallery walls.

The pieces featured in the exhibition were produced over a period that runs from 1960 to the present. They are the work of several generations of artists from a range of backgrounds. Borrowed for the most part from public collections, these artworks form our common heritage. Through them the artists have steadily experimented with the living, contrasted geological time with the brevity of our human presence, and explored the resistance of art materials. Incorporating meticulousness, ritual, preservation, these processes are more about ordinary gestures and experience than perfected visual form. Some of the artists also develop a strong connection between their body and things, or even consider their body as a thing in the world.

Focusing on simple gestures that at first glance can be done by anyone, the show is a form of praise for the slow, the private, the banal, in the sense of “knowing how to make the most of what you have on hand.”

The artworks and pieces are fragile, even precarious. Produced simply and cheaply, they touch on a range of things, anxiety about the environment (Agnes Denes, Koji Enokura), degradation (William Anastasi), constancy, randomness and the unforeseeable (Michel Blazy), performance in public space (Guillaume Leblon), time (Nicholas Nixon), praise of dreams (Melanie Counsell), the connections between walking and the process of art (Helen Mirra), poetic acts (Gina Pane, Marie Cool Fabio Balducci), and ecological protest (Hans Schabus). Still others involve

a humble collection (Jean Le Gac), or collecting a world that is normally overlooked (Dove Allouche, Bela Kolářová), the empty private gesture (Lili Dujourie, Jiri Kovanda), observing the negligible (Gordon Matta-Clark), revelation (Lara Almarcegui), anthropological recording (Marcos Avila Forero), writing (Marcelline Delbecq), and play (Roman Signer, Mathias Schweizer).

To coincide with the exhibition, we are also publishing and making available to the public the eighth installment of the review *Mecca*. Co-designed by Marcelline Delbecq and Mathias Schweizer, *Mecca 8* can be seen as an extension of the show. The two were invited to produce their own reading of the exhibition using the everyday tools of their profession—for her writing, for him graphic design. Working without any visual support, Marcelline wrote about the show based solely on the tour I gave her of the still-empty galleries at the art center. Her narrative fragments are accompanied by a tour in images composed by Mathias. And thus, so many sensory connections keep springing up that *tout le monde* is addressed to everyone.

Claire Le Restif
Exhibition curator

For a decade now, **Marcelline Delbecq** (France, 1977) has been designing and combining sound installations, photographs, films and publications. They form a narrative world of sound and words that lies between document and fiction, past and present. Recently Delbecq tur-

ned away from these art practices to devote herself to writing. Based on the oral account of the show that Claire Le Restif gave her, Delbecq created a fictional, literary story to accompany the eighth edition of *Mecca*, a free alternative publication founded in 2005.

Gallery 1

Mechlin (2006) shows **Melanie Counsell** (United Kingdom, 1964) lying in the grass beneath a tree. A slight breeze creates effects of shadow and light that suggest Impressionist painting and the simple joys of summer naps. Mounted in a loop, the film depicts the artist indulging in a rest that seems eternal. Counsell sings the praises of sluggishness and sloth, portraying an apparent nonaction, i.e., sleeping. And yet, facing a hectic frenetic world, merely stopping is indeed a romantic and political act.

Lara Almarcegui (Spain, 1972) likes to focus her eye and actions on abandoned spaces that are in the process of being demolished or transformed, combining social commitment with her practice as an artist. Invited by Crédac in 2010, she toured the changing territory of Ivry-sur-Seine, explored the area up and down, and from that investigation sprang her 2013 book *Ivry souterrain* (Ivry Underground), in which she paints a reverse portrait of the city through an inventory of its basements and underground areas. As Almarcegui puts it, with *Restoring the market of Gros a few days before its demolition, Gros Market, San Sebastian* (1995), “I was invited to participate in an exhibition in a market that was about to be demolished. It was a fantastic building from the ‘30s, with rounded corners and one-meter eaves projecting out of it, that still served as a market. It seemed incredible to me that the neighborhood life that goes on around a market was about to disappear and that I was going to take advantage of

that by making an exhibition. To call attention to the quality of the building and the problems surrounding it, I decided to restore it. I was perfectly aware I would not have the time to restore it completely, but spending a month in the scaffolding trying to would at least show a position.” As for *Repair and occupy an abandoned boat, Stockholm* (2003), she explains: “In a city where every space is totally regulated and nothing seems to be left to chance, I found a place that didn’t correspond to any definition of space, a boat that had been abandoned in a park, which looked more like a shed than a boat. To demonstrate my interest in that sort of construction, I decided to restore the craft, clean it up, repair it, and paint it to make it a comfortable place and, eventually, use it. Just as the boat ‘occupied’ public space by being installed in the park, I was occupying public space by being in the boat myself.”

Sink (1963–2015) is a piece dreamed up by **William Anastasi** (United States, 1933) that was first “activated” in 1963 according to the following protocol: set a rectangular piece of hot-rolled carbon steel level on the floor. Pour on it a measure of tap water so that the resulting pond holds its position short of overflow. Each time the water evaporates, repeat. By attacking the steel day in day out, rust has set in motion the slow process of the work’s disappearance, like some minimalist vanitas painting. *Sink*, whose title can be read of course as both a noun (e.g. the kitchen sink) and the verb meaning to descend or cause to descend beneath the surface of a liquid, is actuated by the water that is both feeding and destroying it at the same time.

Michel Blazy (Monaco, 1966) devises meticulous, quasi-scientific protocols for the programmed growth or rotting away of his artworks. A range of vegetation is colonizing two of the artist’s coats laid one atop

the other (*Untitled*, 2015). Both experimental and precise, the microcosm he has created is changing according to the tropism of Crédac. *Collection d’avocats* springs from the simple, familiar and childlike gesture hinted at in the “collection of avocado trees” announced in the French title, i.e., keeping an avocado pit and planting it in the hope of growing a tree. This gardening experiment was begun in 1997 and has yielded a living collection that requires all of the artist’s attention. Time and living matter are the two essential components of his works, whose unstable developments and biological changes form a visual world that is mutant and fragile.

Each action of the duo **Marie Cool and Fabio Balducci** (France, 1961 / Italy, 1964) is done in revolt against a demand to be productive, in the sense of the obligation to achieve a result in a given space. Both poetic and political, their actions are a way for the two to cut themselves off from every productive activity and concentrate on a precise gesture in an obstinate calm. In the action *Untitled (colored pencils, table)* (2010), we see a hand regularly pushing a row of color pencils that are lined up on a table. The simple gesture recalls the repetition and precision that go into the work of a manual laborer. The action can also be done in the exhibition space by others.

The discretion that runs through the interventions that **Jiri Kovanda** (Czechoslovakia, 1953) has devised for public spaces points to the unsure economic context and political censorship that reigned in Czechoslovakia before the Iron Curtain fell. In that context Kovanda devised actions that were captivating as much for their provocative aspect and as for their deadpan seriousness. Yet the artist prefers to steer away from any political reading of his work. Rather it is the relationship between daily routine

and the individual's public role that dominates his actions (*Pressing myself...*, 1977). His poetic and ironic actions with their sham childish character (*I play marbles...*, 1977) create anomalies, i.e., slight changes, odd discrepancies that are almost invisible in the normal course of things. Delicately subversive, *Two of us* (2011), an action performed at the exhibition, questions the connection with others and our habits as visitors.

Temps libre (2001) shows **Guillaume Leblon** (France, 1971) leaping from a building in Arnhem, the Netherlands. Done in public and without tricks, this performance refers to Yves Klein's *Leap into the void*, the famous photomontage created in 1960. Leblon underscores the trickery in Klein's work and questions the artist's ability to carry out extraordinary actions. He tackles the mythologies of flight and falling, such as Icarus's plunge. Like some initiation ritual, this leap is a hymn to freedom that resonates in the limitless imagination of artists.

Shot as part of his project for the *Brooklyn Bridge Event*, an exhibition held in 1971, *Fire Child* is a film by **Gordon Matta-Clark** (United States, 1943-1978) that documents both the poverty of the Lower East Side of Manhattan, with its population of rejects and homeless people, and a simple performance by the artist, which involved recycling the trash from the zone under the Brooklyn Bridge into material for producing shelters. The video begins with the image of a man building a little fire fed by garbage, helped by a small boy. The artist enters the picture and lights another fire before working on a plaster wall made from newspapers layered over an armature of wire mesh. We are watching the making of a sculpture fashioned from chaos in chaos.

Shown nowadays in the form of archives, *Rice/Tree/Burial* (1977-

2012) is a public ecological performance that was first done in 1968 by **Agnes Denes** (Hungary, 1938) in Sullivan County (New York State), and performed a second time in 1977 in Artpark near Niagara Falls. In this three-act work, the first action involves sowing rice, and the second chaining the trees of a sacred Indian forest. Finally, for the third act, Denes enclosed a haiku, a microfilm and a questionnaire in a capsule that is only to be opened in the 30th century. These actions are meant to reflect the paradoxes of human ones, notably in our connection with nature.

Gallery 2

Mathias Schweiger (Switzerland, 1974) built *Din Tower* (2011) from standard paper formats. He used the ratio of an A1 sheet cut in half to obtain an A2 format, and so on until he reached A6. Developed by Lichtenberg in 1918 and adopted by DIN (the German Institute of Norms), this ratio has made it possible to optimize storing reams of paper and harmonize formats internationally. Schweiger's final composition forms a geometrical tower, something between a construction game and postminimalist esthetics that lies within everyone's grasp.

Kōji Enokura (Japan, 1942-1995) was one of the essential representatives of Mono-ha (the School of Things), an antimodernist movement based in Tokyo that was active from 1968 to 1973, focusing on often fleeting installations made of rocks, sand, wood, cotton, and other raw materials. *Symptom - Sea-Body (P.W.-N° 40)* (1972) shows the artist engaged in an act that is poetic and absurd at one and the same time. Lying on a beach at the point where the waves die out, he seems to embrace or want to stop the inevitable movement of the rising tide.

The self-taught **Běla Kolářová** (Czechoslovakia, 1923-2010)

was a member of the Union of Czechoslovakian Artists, but had a hard time fitting in. She rejected the humanist photography of the 1950s-1960s embodied by Cartier-Bresson and preferred Dadaist experimentations (*The alphabet of things I*, 1964) collecting nails, pins, barrettes, lip sticks, hair, and metal objects, which she would arrange in a graphic, often abstract way (*Metal shavings*, 1962). Kolářová was interested in the day-to-day world of little things that other photographers normally overlooked.

The actions performed by **Gina Pane** (France, 1939) on site are lived experiences, though often solitary ones, in a personal connection with nature. Bury a ray of sunshine in the earth, move stones, record tracks and traces, these are some of the gestures she inscribes in the landscape, putting "classic" artmaking more in the background. *Autocritique* (Self-criticism, 1969) involved the artist throwing four drawings into the Chisone, a stream near Turin, constituting a breaking point for Pane in her relationship to art history. The apparent simplicity of this highly symbolic gesture, however, does have something of precise ritual and *mise en scène*, prefiguring the public performances where she used her body (1971 to 1978). The series of photographs selected by Pane documents a gesture she made without an audience in an almost intimate connection with the stream. The individual photos display the process of the act and what went on behind the scenes as it were, showing us another reality.

The protean work of the Austrian artist **Hans Schabus** (Austria, 1970) is made up of gestures that are sometimes invisible and sometimes quite spectacular, e.g., dig a tunnel, wrap the Austrian pavilion at the Venice Biennale in wood, or flood the ground floor of a museum and install a boat there. The two recurrent and fundamental themes running throu-

ghout his work are the studio-laboratory and the artist's fictional journeys around the world. *Waldstück*, literally "wood piece", (2009) was originally an archival German press photograph depicting a protest that also involved dozens of police officers in a forest in the 1970s. The image was used for an album cover but Schabus resized and reframed it so that only the protesters perched in the trees appear, letting us interpret the scene as we see fit.

For two years, **Dove Allouche** (France, 1972) worked to digitize the return slips for books borrowed from the poetry shelves of the Sarcelles public library. The series of dates stamped on these slips constitutes a kind of memory of the city's reader-inhabitants over some fifty years, forming a measure of time. *Retours : secteur poésie, Bibliothèque Municipale Anna Langfus, Ville de Sarcelles* (2003-2005) is the result of Allouche's inventory, comprising ten 280-page volumes numbered from I to X. Dove Allouche creates a sensitive composition from collections' titles. They evoke the intimate, as much as the dream, the organic and the mineral, echoing the actions of artists inscribed in nature.

Gallery 3

The photographer **Nicholas Nixon** (United States, 1947) has been influenced by the pioneers of documentary portrait like Edward Weston and Walker Evans. *The Brown Sisters*, his most emblematic series, is grounded in the tradition of family portrait. Nixon's approach is simple: each year since 1975, he has shot a portrait of the Brown sisters, Beverly (his wife), Heather, Mimi and Laurie. They always appear in the same order; only their poses and facial expressions change, while the haircuts and the clothes come in and out of fashion. The series now comprises forty portraits, reflecting our relationship to time and death. "Tout le monde" can be seen in the

character both private and universal of the six photographs (1999-2004) displayed in the show.

Daily walks are an integral part of how **Helen Mirra** (United States, 1970) makes art. The piece of sculpture called *Mountain building event* (2007) is a stone partly covered by lichen that the artist picked up during a walk and has posed on the pair of trousers she was wearing at the time. The browns and greens of the stone go well with the khaki color of the trousers. Yet the geological time of the stones and lichen, which takes several hundred years to grow, strikes a real contrast with the brevity of human existence embodied by the article of clothing. The stone also symbolizes the trace of a lived moment that has been extended into the exhibition space. Mirra thus operates a geographic shift of an element removed from its natural milieu and implanted anew in the climate of the art exhibition, forming a poetic, minimalist readymade.

Created by **Marcos Avila Forero** (France-Colombia, 1983), the video piece *Atrato* (2014) takes its name from the river that runs through the Chocó forest, one of the poorest regions of Columbia. In a context that is stamped by an ongoing civil war, and where control of the river is a strategic matter, Marcos Avila Forero traveled to the villages of Tagachí and Tutunendo in search of a forgotten custom called "Tamboleo." This ancestral practice involves striking the surface of the water with the hands to produce sounds and make them resonate as a means of communication. Accompanied by anthropologists, ethnomusicologists and percussionists, the artist went in search of local people of Afro-Columbian descent living along the river to try to find vestiges of the technique and use it to make music.

Jean Le Gac (France, 1936) is exhibiting a range of geological curiosities from various regions of France

through a collection of old postcards picturing strange tourist sites. He recreates the childhood gesture of collecting stones gleaned here and there to fill his pockets. *Les Rochers* (The Rocks, 1973) embarks the immobile traveler on an imaginary journey where gigantic stones with animal and human shapes ("Napoleon's profile"), or in positions that defy the laws of gravity ("the trembling rock"), encourage all sorts of legends.

Since the 1970s, **Lili Dujourie** (Belgium, 1941) has been experimenting with various ways to record directly and without interruption scenes in which she shows herself for long periods of time in simply framed shots. In her video *Koraal* (1978), the artist films her hands peeling an orange. This piece of fruit doesn't yield itself immediately. Peeling it requires time and a certain patience, which the film scene transcribes in real time in one long take.

The protocol governing *Action avec une bicyclette et papier, réalisée le 20 octobre 1991 dans la vallée du Rhin, canton de Saint-Gall* (Action with a bicycle and paper done on 20 October 1991 in the Rhine Valley, the Canton of St. Gallen) consisted of lining up sheets of paper on the ground and riding over them with a bicycle. **Roman Signer** (Switzerland, 1938) left a line on the paper that is the result of both the dirty tires of his bike and the more or less rectilinear path ridden by the artist. Since the 1970s, in short filmed sequences Signer has been experimenting with how a body can or cannot resist pressure and the laws of gravity. The processes of his sculpture and performance entail instability, falling, melting, evaporation, and flowing, as well as projections, explosions, and taking flight. The banal objects he uses are associated with devices that lie midway between the scientific experiment and poetic terrorism.