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« Contemporariness inscribes itself in the present by marking it above all archaic. Only he who perceives the indices and signatures of the archaic in the most modern and recent can be contemporary. »

Giorgio Agamben

artistic approach

The elaboration process of my images is long because it is always a photographic « scripting » by editing, by accumulation, at once empirical and a method of exaggeration, aspiring to the most appropriate transcription of places - which often have a function of devices (dipositifs), such business center, shopping malls, factories, places dedicated to the work, to the entertainment, places of leisure, places of power -and societal facts that i observed.

My images are articulated according to several temporality, use anachronistic effects and work between aesthetic and political.

In my photographic work, the references to history painting give me the tools of parody : the stake is the description of the « contemporary ». The usage of a past iconography (matrix of my images), as the propaganda and history painting, allows me to renew the description on our period and to reveal her archaisms ¹.

1. Giorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus and Other Essays*, Stanford University Press . Essay *What is the Contemporary ?*, chap 6, p50.



Condensation Zone 15 / 2010

Condensation Zone, 2010

PREVENTION
SOLIDARITY
SHOW
PARK
COMMUNITY
ECOLOGY
SCIENCE
WASTE
HELP
SECURITY
PRESS
TICKET
DISTRIBUTION
CAMP

CONDENSATION ZONE















Incidents / Dystopia #8, «Créteil City Hall» / 2009

Incidents, 2009

Well before the financial crisis and its increase in layoffs, since the «incidents» of November, 2005 in suburbs, the ideas of uprising and revolution in France was in most people's minds, arousing fear or hope.

The archetypal image of the representation of such events is certainly the storming of the Bastille. The prison-fortress which only contained seven prisoners at the time of its storming, didn't represent more than the emblem of royal power.

Fascinated by Robert Hubert's painting, *The Bastille in the first days of its demolition*, by its frontal view, the jail occupying almost all the picture, and by these effects of romantic light, restless sky and smokes, I began to search some recent architectural emblems of state, with the idea to produce a similar image.

I limited myself to the most striking examples, products of town planning of the years 60-70. I chose the New Towns for their realization of an urban utopia produced by an «authoritarian decision». A new architecture intended for the poor men to resume the arguments of Guy Debord (1).

City halls, prefectures, courts, my small Bastilles: these institutional buildings were mostly built in the brutalist style of the period, showing clearly their function of governance : a dystopian architecture designed on the theme of fortress or military bunker ?

The sociologist Mike Davis speaks about an «invisible riot» in 92 in Los Angeles (2). A riot made invisible by the media which preferred to show only a black uprising of the population while it was multiethnic. The same underestimation to describe the riots of 2005 in France, the same attempt to play down the facts : incidents for some, social unrest for the others.

The police notes that the rioters proceeded by small very mobile groups, rather than a frontal assault (3). No gang, no organization. Very mobile, almost invisible? Recently, *The Invisible Committee*, in its book *The uprising which comes*, makes the promotion of this method: «Not become visible but take advantage of the anonymity in which we were relegated. The fire of 2005 offers the model.» (4)

The series *Incidents* organize these ideas of diminishing reality, euphemism and invisibility to deliver finally only the symbols of power and revolt : the architecture (scene of the incidents), smokes, fires, files and papers thrown from broken windows. The actors are absent, the rioters are nowhere to be seen, the forces of order deserted, the population hides in their homes...

1 cf p96, chapter 7 "Territorial domination", *Society of the Spectacle* by Guy Debord, Rebel Press 2004.

2 « Beyond Blade Runner » in *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* by Mike Davis, New York, Metropolitan Books, 1998.

3 cf p8, *Quand les banlieues brûlent* ...by Laurent Muciel, Véronique Le Goaziou, éditions La Découverte (2006)

4 cf p102, *L'insurrection qui vient* by Comité invisible. éditions La Fabrique (2007)



Incidents / Dystopia #2, «Seine-Saint-Denis Prefecture» / 2009



Incidents / Dystopia #3, «Nanterre City Hall» / 2009



Incidents / Dystopia #1, «Bobigny City Hall» / 2009



Incidents / Dystopia #5, «Val de Marne Prefecture» / 2009



Incidents / Dystopia #4, «Val-d'Oise Prefecture» / 2009



Incidents / Dystopia #6, «Essonne Prefecture» / 2009



Incidents / Dystopia #7, «Créteil Court of *Grande Instance* » / 2009

The statements, which are going to follow, at least some of them, will give an impression of exaggeration. And it's for the simple reason that they are effectively exaggerations. What it means? That there are some phenomena which are impossible to approach without intensifying them, without enlarging them: phenomena which escaping to the naked-eye, place us in the following alternative: « or the exaggeration, or the renunciation of the knowledge ». The microscopy and the telescoping are the most immediate examples, which try to reach the truth by means of an amplified image.

Gunther Anders, The obsolescence of the man

The parody does not question the reality of its object, as makes it the fiction. On the contrary, this object is so unbearably real that it is much rather a question of keeping it at a distance. Instead of the «as if» of the fiction, the parody give a drastic « it is too like that « – and in the same time a « as if not « (...). The parody is always tense between the reality and the fiction.

Giorgio Agamben, Profanations



#STA_PAN «Stade de France, Stadium in Saint Denis» 2007 83 x 305 cm / C print , 3 ex + 2 ap]

Dispositifs, 2007

The philosopher Michel Foucault written about panoptism: «A real subjection arises mechanically from a fictional relation. In such a way that it is not necessary to use force to oblige the condemned person to have a good behaviour, the madman to the peace, the worker to the work ... « and in a previous chapter of Discipline and Punish, entitled « the means of the check dressage », Foucault origins the elaboration of the panoptism in military camp, « this hasty and artificial city, which we build and remodels almost at will, object of all the perfections, allowing to refine the plans of the most efficient surveillance”. In every part of the camp during any time of the day people are being watched. «The camp is the diagram of a power that acts by means of general visibility.» This type of architectural design was taken over by schools, hospitals, prisons and other institutions.

My series Devices want to show or evoke these military and architectural means. The same that I observed on the walls of Palazzo Publico of Siena. The panoramic made at the stadium of France (in Paris), by its emphasis of the architectural elements, its treatment of the space and its theme, quotes the fresco of Lorenzetti The effects of the good government in the city and in the campaign. To this framework comes to overlap the Simone Martini's fresco, a representation of Guidoriccio da Fogliano after his victory on Montemassi. This also panoramic fresco represents a deserted landscape exepcted the hero, structured by a ensemble of disused fight devices: fort, palisade, military camp. All the attributes of the virtuous power are given to see in Palazzo Publico: the security obsession and the military regime of any device of governance. “Our society is not one of spectacle but of surveillance” insists Michel Foucault even though his theory coincides in a complementary way with the visionary analyses of Günter Anders and Guy Debord on the society of the spectacle.

I chose to photograph the accesses of the traditional places, which are the stadium and the circus. It appears that these devices of spectacle are permanently reactualized, by the new surveillance technologys (as video and wifi system) and by an ostentatious structural perfection (the mechanical aspect of the stadium of France, the immaculate white of the enclosing wall and circus tents of the multinational “The Circus of the sun”), or on the contrary by replaying the signs, the symbols of a past power, parodying themselves in a deployment of flags and monted police. All this is well enough convenient for the parodic vision and for the process of exaggeration of my works.



#CIR_PAN «Cirque du Soleil, in Saint Denis» 2007 83 x 305 cm / [C print , 3 ex + 2 ap]



#PAR_PAN «Park of La Courneuve, in Saint Denis» 2007 83 x 305 cm [C print , 3 ex + 2 ap]



#STA3 2007 36 x 54 cm, #STA4 2007 60 x 72,5 cm, #STA5 2007 36 x 54 cm / [C print , 5 ex + 2 ap]



#CIR1 72 x 100 cm / [C print , 5 ex + 2 ap]



Dreamworks #KI_7168_OK 125x162 cm or 90x116 cm

Dreamworks, 2006

The Dreamworks series is, as my previous work, an interrogation of our era. By making subjective and scripted images of our reality, I hope to reveal aspects that are little (or not enough) visible and to make connections between the phenomena that constitute and structure the world, like the media and the entertainment industries and the world of work. Photomontage enables me to accentuate and intensify these phenomena and to bring them together and to present them in a more legible image of the contemporary world. In Dreamworks, I have drawn on past modes of representation.

I am referencing socialist propaganda photomontage to provoke uncertainty. Enabling us to see things differently by playing on the articulation of the unknown and the familiar, raising the issue of what is true and what is false. Making clear that things are not as we think they are.

The montage is finally always apparent. In the final versions of the series, everything is realistic to the eye, but the story-construction (grotesque or absurd) confirms the fictional or fake aspects of the image. The spatial discontinuities, the contradictions of light and perspectives then express (or amplify) the absurd nature of the situations shown. Moving into the direction of exaggeration, caricature or grotesqueness. Since the conception of photomontage, two lines of thought have been opposed: John Heartfield, who considered the new image thus produced as a new recreated photo (only few elements, a stripped down organic composition, but with a sense of humour and ridicule that in the end is quite like that of advertising), whereas the constructivists insisted on virtuoso compositions, composed of complex and visible fragments to incite enthusiasm and support for their ideas (the images are often without humour, but are strangely undermined by the distance taken from reality and the confirmation of the fragmentary). Socialist-realist art, confronted with this contradiction, ended up choosing Heartfield's aesthetic, to be able to speak to the people and be less intellectual.

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German philosopher Günther Anders speaks of how the production process is broken down in such isolated tasks that for the worker there is no visible effect of their own contribution. Moreover, none of the finished products show the work and the abilities that the employees have invested in them. The workers are active without clear objective; the work becomes an activity without meaning. This mechanical work without visible goal is for Anders only 'an appearance of human activity' absorbed into (active) passivity. Anders quotes the slogans 'Just do your job', 'your future is taken care of.'

Those ideas of passivity and inactivity are present in my work, as well as the impossibility of fully comprehending what the workers whom I photographed are doing. The notion of passivity, Anders extends to leisure time, because, according to him, leisure time is not chosen but forced upon you by the media.



Dreamworks #HT_5227_PA , Dreamworks #ST_6794_KI 125x162 cm or 90x116 cm



Dreamworks #CH_6342_MT, #CH_6792_TA, #CH_6794_ST, #BU_7615_PA
125x96 cm or 90x69 cm



Dreamworks #TA_6306_PA, 125x96 cm or 90x69 cm



Dreamworks #KI_7284_MU , Dreamworks #RU_7962_KI 125x162 cm or 90x116cm



Dreamworks #KI_7761_PA 125x109 cm or 90x78cm
Dreamworks #KI_6817_CH , Dreamworks #CH_6583_VI 125x142 cm or 90x102 cm



Station #CL-05 / 71x85 cm

Station, 2006

On the platforms of Gare Saint-Lazare, Debanne photographs travellers, stationary during their daily journey, seeking direction. With these portraits he combines suburban landscapes: prefabs apparently made of millboard, pieces of concrete architecture often topped by skies that herald imminent disaster. When recontextualised, the travellers' posture plays on the semantics of the term "station": a brief moment on the platforms of the "station", it hovers between prayer and revelation.

Station combines the idea of suburban landscape, perceived as a generic globalised image, with the idea of the "world-landscape" (Weltlandschaft) of Renaissance painting. In both cases, the landscape is characterised by an allegorical, reinvented place. In Vincent Debanne's work, the landscape – a thing of activity, impermanence and accumulation – makes itself "the world's future": closely linked to the socio-economic fabric, it tasks itself with charting a future direction. These landscapes – in which one space-time continuum overlays another, unreal and visionary – and the guidance-seeking figures attached to them, engender doubt and questions in the manner of Giorgio de Chirico's metaphysical and anachronistic paintings.

Onirism impregnates these images, which feign reality by transfiguring it. It becomes absurd. One then feels an ambivalent, paradoxical desire: to see the individual regain affiliation to a tragic fate or collective imaginative realm. Out of shot, an event seems to be going on; but to the viewer it remains indeterminate. Is it disaster, revelation, or advent?

The photomontage aims for a fictitious reconstruction which loses its ideal and univocal character – as when used for propaganda – and creates an ambiguous, dystopian image. Thus, Station acquires a new connotation: a futuristic dimension, in which the term is akin to the

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mythology of science-fiction. The characters wear looks of amazement and incredulity, with open mouths and stiff gestures – ushering the image into a collective adventure, which is being played out but whose representational artifice invites us to keep our distance. This series invents the tableaux of a kind of contemporary history.

In Station one finds the same tension between present and future that Jean-Claude Guillebaud describes in *Le Goût de l'Avenir*¹: “Man can only live and think ahead of himself. (...) Human consciousness takes the initiative to hurry what awaits us (...) ceaselessly endeavouring to change the material of the present by metamorphosing it: through our efforts, slowly coaxing the face of the future to appear in it. In the final analysis, the words expectation, desire, worry, hope and willpower all define the same thing: our humanity.”

Audrey Illouz

¹ Guillebaud, Jean-Claude. *Le Goût de l'Avenir*. Le Seuil: Paris, 2004.



Station #AV-06 / 50X60 cm, Station #PT-06 / 71X85 cm
Station #GE-05 / 50X60 cm, Station #CLV-05 / 50X60 cm



Station #SPE-05 / 85 x 102 cm, Station #OUE-05 / 50X60 cm
Station #EM-06 / 85 x 102 cm, Station #ASN-05 / 50x60 cm



Station #EMP-06 / 85x102 cm, Station #RCO-05 / 71 X85 cm

Station #PA-05 / 50X60 cm, Station #PA-06 / 50X60 cm



Station #LEV-05 / 50X60 cm, Station #CBV-05 / 50X60 cm
Station #CNL-05 / 50X60 cm, Station #SD-05 / 50X60 cm



Station #CLP-05 / 50X60 cm



WTC #UCE04 30x40 cm

Welcome to children, 2005

Welcome to children being a commercial slogan from a shopping mall, which reminds us strangely the wish of Jesus in the bible : «*Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children.*»

By magnifying the floodtide from a car to the gates of a supermarket, by exaggerating repetitive events, by paying attention to the placing of bodies, to gestures, what was initially only a journey becomes the scene and occasion of a particular history. The car park then becomes a stage for rituals, processions, parades and a family shopping day can be described as an important initiation. This act of choreography is indeed, as the writer J.G Ballard said, an « invention of reality ». But the photographs are by essence echoes derived from symbolic substitutions as brought about by capitalism.



WTC#VAL04, WTC#TOR04, WTC#TOI04, WTC#STE04, WTC#PAR04, WTC#NEU04
WTC#EP04, WTC#CAR04, WTC#TAP04, WTC#BAN04
/ 30x40 cm



WTC#BEL04 / 30x40 cm



Def # 1 / 24x 30 cm

Les troupes de la Défense, 2004

Philosophically reconstructed reality is the exclusive feature of Vincent Debanne's creation. Willing to show, what is hidden behind the reality or to uncloset it he simply reconstructs it.

In the series "Defence Forces" photographer questions the life of contemporary man. People who are walking from the metro station to their office in the main business center "The Defense" of Paris are like integral part of the environmental surroundings: impersonal, cold and alienated. Photography in a certain way approves that the main axis of contemporary peoples' life is their job however they rarely understand the sense of it, nor try to. In the perfectly composed photos, where colour and light play a significant role, you will never see the direct contact with person's eyes; they do not even try to raise their eyes or have a look around. People are submerged in themselves or daily newspaper as well as committing themselves to become the part of uniformed mass of dark suits, composing an unexpected scene of choreography perceived by the author.

In the series "Welcome to Children" Vincent Debanne in the same oppressive way is again trying to show how we really look from aside. The wells, huge squares that ought to be the main centers of attraction and meeting points in nowadays are replaced by shopping malls – swamping everybody and everything around. People with shopping bags and trolleys hardly passing each other by, noticing nothing around them become the source and a part of the ritual of consuming.

Paradoxically, directed photography itself becomes a testimony of reality, perfectly reflecting the spirit of our times. It is not clear anymore what is truth and what is false, because unreal images (simulacra) are much more forcible as models of the reality. Vincent Debanne photography is like postmodern philosophy, expressed by photographic means.

Egle Deltuvaite



Def # 5



Def # 12



Def # 11

/ 24x 30 cm



Def # 2



Def # 8

SOLO SHOW

- November / January 2008 «Magic of working together» : «Dreamworks» + «Dispositifs»
Gallery Griesmar-Tamer, Paris, France
- May 2007 «Station»
La Grange, Montreuil sur Brèche, France
- April 2007 «The Silent majority»
Photography Union Gallery , Vilnius, Lituania
- September 2006 «The Silent majority»
Bibliothèque Municipale de Lyon, September of photography
«Des corps dans la ville», Lyon, France
- July / August 2006 «Station»
Rencontres d'Arles, Arles, France
- February / April 2006 «The Silent majority»
Gallery Hors-Sol, Paris, France
(Grant for the first exhibition, CNAP, Ministry of Culture)

COLLECTIVE EXHIBITION

- September 2010 «Paris-Moscou»
Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris
- Mars 2010 «Paris-Moscou», Moscow Photo Biennale 2010
Moscow Museum of Modern Art
- February 2010 «Simulacres et parodies, Mise en scène et petits arrangements photographiques»
Gallery Château d'eau, Toulouse, France
- September 2009 « Dispositifs », «Les troupes de la Défense»
Quinzaine Photographique Nantaise, Nantes, France
- January 2009 «Les troupes de la Défense», Un semblant de réel
avec la Galery du Château d'eau, Montauban, France
- September 2007 «Dreamworks»
Dom Fotografie, Liptovsky, Slovakia
- July 2007 «Dreamworks»,
MuViM, Valencia, Spain
- Mars 2007 «Dreamworks»
Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal « Work Changing Faces #2»,
Leiden, Netherlands
- November 2006 «Station»
Fotogalerie Wien, « Wazzup ? », Wien, Austria
- October 2006 «Les troupes de la Défense», Fête promise
CCC - Centre de Création Contemporaine, Tours, France
- September 2005 «Welcome to children»
L'été de la photographie, Stimultania, Strasbourg, France
Sur la proposition de la Galerie du Forum de Toulouse
- September 2004 «Welcome to children»
Rencontres photographiques de Niort, France
Exposition collective et résidence avec Joan Fontcuberta

PRIX / RESIDENCES / BOURSES

November 2009	Grant for acquisition of technical material DRAC Ile-de-France, France
July- September 2008	Résidence Paris - Moscou, Ville de Paris et CulturesFrance Moscow House of Photography, Moscow, Russia
August/ November 2006	Résidence Dom Fotografie, Liptovsky, Slovakia I.P.R.N 'Changing Faces' project
January / Mars 2006	Résidence Centre Photographique d'Ile-de-France, Pontault-Combault, France
July 2004	«Strategic places», Lauréat, Festival Voies Off award, Arles, France

Nominated Sedond Edition of GD4PhotoArt 2009-11
Nominated Prix de l'Académie des Beaux-Arts 2008
Nominated KLM Paul Huf Award 2007
Laureat Prize Voix Off , Arles Festival

PUBLICATIONS

Novembre 2007	Monography published by Dom Fotografie, Slovakia
Avril 2007	Work (Changing Faces), commissions year #2 , i(p+r)/Veenman publishers, Nederlands

STUDYS

National School of Photography, Arles, France

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Incidents



Vincent Debanne,
Dispositifs



Station



Dreamworks



Welcome to children



Les troupes de la Défense

