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Ecotone

18.12.2009-28.02.2010

Centre national de l'audiovisuel, Dudelange, Luxembourg
Ouvert du mardi au dimanche de 10h00 à 22h00

Justine Blau
Gast Bouschet & Nadine Hilbert
Jim Goldberg
Nadav Kander
Eugene Richards
Roger Wagner



www.ecotone.lu

www.cna.lu



LE GOUVERNEMENT
DU GRAND-DUCHÉ DE LUXEMBOURG
Ministère de la Culture

Avec l'aimable soutien de Magnum Photos et des Rencontres d'Arles

ECOTONE

The *ECOTONE* exhibition brings together 7 artists of different generations and backgrounds to explore the theme of "betweenness" the transient nature of things, migrations, dualities, confluents, yet also the intrinsic paradox of photography itself in terms of its positioning in a world between reality and construction.

ECOTONE takes its name from ecology, where it designates an intermediary zone between two natural systems, transient or at odds with each other, characterised by a high density and diversity of species, often unexpected or astray. The term derives from the Greek "oikos" which refers to the habitat and "tonos", meaning tension.

ECOTONE undoubtedly refers to this ecological dimension, but furthermore, it serves as a receptacle to speak to us more broadly of moments in which living milieus are in mutual tension.

The exhibition explores multiform universes, diversified approaches, blurring the frontiers between conceptual and documentary works, varying the degree of proximity and distance, blending anecdote and history.



The Blue Room by **Eugene Richards** portrays the instability of this in-between by way of visual tales of abandoned houses gathered over the course of his travels through rural America (Nebraska, Arkansas, North Dakota, ...). A spatiotemporal road movie in which backdrops of abandoned lives become a visual poem on the transient nature of things: a bed covered with snow, a staircase to nowhere sitting in the middle of a garden, a lipstick stained cigarette butt... Or his portrait of a woman, whose melancholic gaze seems to be dissolving

along with the decomposition of the paper on which it is printed, an image both seductive and disquieting. Inhabited by absence, things seem to hover – between a bygone, former life, and something else, as yet unknown, to come.

Justine Blau's landscapes speak of voyaging and the imaginary yet here on a more conceptual register. Her landscape models, meticulously put together from images gleaned off the Web, invite us to discover a fictive space. While by definition the model sketches what exists or will exist, here it materialises the concentrated illusions generated by the Web, thus confronting us with the question of representation- a continuous imbalance between an existing thing and a constructed whole, between the original and its translation, between the familiar and the unknown. *Somewhere Else* also evokes the vain search for the exotic and an elsewhere in a globalised world now shrinking as it is explored via Google Earth from a laptop – somewhere and here, a ubiquity in which the moment seems to constantly escape the place and vice-versa.





Roger Wagner, *Heysel-Bruxelles*, 2004

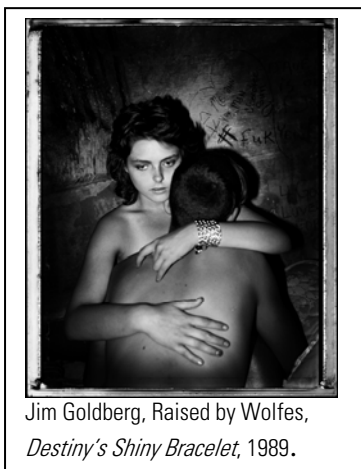
Notions of landscape and representation also lie at the heart of **Roger Wagner's** work. At first sight, the work suggests a natural environment that is "remote" and untouched, but the caption and its title *Heysel-Bruxelles* just as soon refer the shooting location to a contemporary urban space. Underlying notions of the sublime and the picturesque which surface for a brief instant are deceptive; the possibility of an Eden brought into tension by the unexpected coming together of the natural world and the urban, by re-localisation and context. By way of its large format and

technical perfection, *Heysel-Bruxelles* unfolds like an area of contemplation on the aesthetic genre that lies between natural space and cultural construction, mirroring the conceptions and preoccupations of an epoch.

By way of a photographic approach which lays deliberate claim to slowness, in opposition to the accelerated pace of his time, **Nadav Kander** recounts the mutations of an environment and its agglomeration, from the perspective of China's longest river, the Yangtze. The atmosphere of silence and uniform tonality, the wide shot, the studied composition, lend these landscapes a surreal quality – the protagonists seem to be moving detachedly through a vast space, like figures in a super-sized mock-up. In the moment of shooting, time seems to be suspended in a simultaneous presence of past and future, between tradition and progress. The lack of anchorage is palpable, the euphoric growth of a new era progressing at a dizzying pace against a backdrop of almost biblical proportions. A drone of anxiety seems to pervade these images like a kind of background noise: we waver between their intriguing beauty, the threat of an unbalanced ecological reality and the gradual evaporation of memory.



Nadav Kander, *Yangtze – The Long River, Chongqing XI*, 2007.

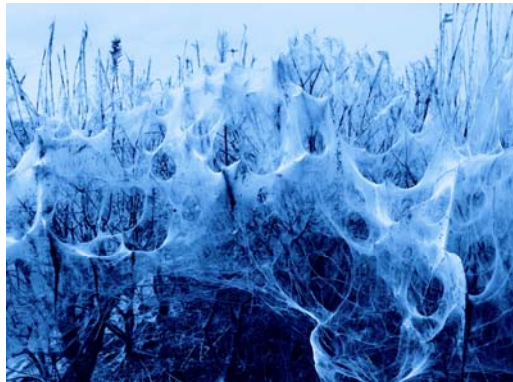


Jim Goldberg, *Raised by Wolves, Destiny's Shiny Bracelet*, 1989.

In stark contrast to Nadav Kander's painterly and constructed photographic universe, **Jim Goldberg** has been experimenting for many years now with a very personal and hard-hitting visual language. In *Raised by Wolves*, he combines objects, handwritten texts by the subjects themselves, and family snapshots to mirror— via an aesthetic of urgency – the state of need of these runaway teenagers whose everyday survival he has set out to document.

Raised by Wolves, also portrays the often destabilising transition from childhood to adulthood, the spirit of rebellion, the clash with oneself and society, with regard to which teenagers must define themselves. The gaze of these street kids bears witness to the more sordid sides of society: the question of social difference, of exclusion, of the established order, of dysfunctional families and of the limits of

consumer society and the American dream insofar as they leave no room for other dreams apart from those endlessly played out by the mass media.



Gast Bouschet & Nadine Hilbert, *FRINGE THINGS [AGAINST EMPIRE]*, Video installation, video loop plus sound, 3min 40sec, 2 jèegs.

FRINGE THINGS [AGAINST EMPIRE], by **Gast Bouschet** and Nadine Hilbert, plunges us into a captivating acoustic and visual universe by way of a recurrent artistic iconography in their work: a night-blue-hued atmosphere, references to the animal world, the blurring of spatial bearings between the micro and the macroscopic, the play of correspondence between the fixed image and images in movement. In their installations, the world seems to quiver in the expectation of a sudden toppling or just after a collision. Spider webs weave in an autistic space and touch upon existential questions, balances of power between dominator and dominated –

reflecting the geopolitical situation of a world in constant movement.

The in-between, the guiding thread of the exhibition, is a notion which seems to really engage artists. Whether we call such betweenness grey areas, fringes, passages, confines, limits, transitions or antipodes, it is a positioning which enables reflection upon the variable constellations that characterise the current world context, a questioning which favours analysis of the complex relations between things, the dynamic instant, the facets and the strata, rather than univocal affirmation.

ECOTONE speaks to us of discontinuity, between end and starting point, known and unknown, a dualistic sentiment symptomatic of the uncertain spirit of an age; in the wake of utopias and ideologies, a vacant lot alive with tensions, complexities, paradigms and ruptures.

Informations pratiques :

Exhibition from 18/12/2009 to 28/02/2010.

From 10 am to 10 pm, Tuesday-Sunday.

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Exhibition produced by the Photography Department - CNA

Catalogue *ECOTONE* in sale at CNA and via e-shop www.cna.lu.

In collaboration with Magnum Photos and Rencontres d'Arles

BIOGRAPHIES

Eugene Richards born in 1944 in Boston (USA), based in New York.

Born in Dorchester, Massachusetts, Eugene Richards completed a degree in English and Journalism, then studied photography with Minor White. Following a four-year period working as a social worker and reporter in eastern Arkansas, Richards published his first book, *Few Comforts or Surprises: The Arkansas Delta* in 1973. Since then he has worked as a freelance editorial photographer for such publications as LIFE, National Geographic and the New York Times Magazine. Richards's subsequent books include *Dorchester Days* (1978), a portrait of the Boston neighborhood where he was born; *Cocaine True, Cocaine Blue* (1994), a study of the impact of hardcore drugs on American society; *Stepping Through the Ashes* (2002), an elegy to those who lost their lives on September 11, 2001; *The Fat Baby* (2004), a collection of fifteen photographic essays produced both on and off assignment; and most recently, *The Blue Room* (2008), a study of the abandoned houses of rural America. His current book project, *War Is Personal*, is a documentation in words and pictures of the consequences of the Iraq war.

Among numerous honors, Richards has been the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Kraszna-Kraus Book Award, the W. Eugene Smith Grant in Humanistic Photography, several National Endowment for the Arts Grants, and the Robert F. Kennedy Lifetime Achievement Journalism Award.

His work is in numerous private and public collections including the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Museum of Contemporary Photography in Chicago, the Harvard Art Museum, Museum Folkwang, and Les Rencontres d'Arles Photographie.

www.eugenerichards.com

Justine Blau, born in 1977 in Luxembourg, lives and works between London and Luxembourg.

Justine Blau's approach is multidisciplinary, creating installations and sculptures inspired by the photographic medium. Her practice deals with every day life observations and research, exploring ideas related to identity, cultural traditions, social interactions and childhood memories.

Following a recent MA at Wimbledon College of Art, London she has been developing work concerned with the yearning for exoticism and foreignness encountered in the West, looking into the ways it is conveyed through culture, politics, the media and tourism. She has exhibited in Europe and Canada with exhibitions including *Observe Adapt Direct* at Dominique Lang and *Normal Service Will Resume* as part of *Open Night* in Liverpool. She has also co-curated shows in Luxembourg and the UK; and is one of the founding members of *ArtRole*, an organisation developing exchanges between the Middle East and the United Kingdom.

www.justineblau.com

Roger Wagner, born in Luxemburg in 1962, lives and works in Luxembourg.

He worked on the stocks, reserves and exhibitions of the Luxemburg Natural History Museum and exhibited his pictures in 1987 at the Luxemburg National Museum of Art gallery. This photographic research was then widened to include other natural history museums throughout Europe. From 1990 to 1991, he worked as a junior lecturer in the workshop of Gilbert Fastenaekens in the photography section of the renowned La Cambre school of visual arts, in Brussels.

From 1991 to 1993, Roger Wagner was commissioned, along with Marie-France Dublé, by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in Paris to lead the *L'Europe Rurale 1994 – Regards hors les villes* project and in 1994-95 to head the in-situ *Paysages-Lieux et non-lieux* project initiated by the CNA and Café Crème Editions. Since 1994, he has been using exclusively large format for his personal projects.

As part of the *Luxemburg-European Capital of Culture 2007* events, he led and coordinated the *Deep South* project initiated by *Sentiers Rouges*.

He has had individual exhibitions at: the Museum Schloß Fellenberg, Merzig (Germany) in 2009, the Nosbaum Reding Gallery in Luxemburg in 2005 and the Erna Hécey, Gallery in Luxemburg in 1999.

His most recent collective exhibitions include *Elo – Inner Exile-Outer Limits*, at the MUDAM in Luxemburg in 2008-2009, *The IKOB Collection* at the Museum van Bommel van Dam, in Venlo (Netherlands) in 2008 and *Welcome to our Neighbourhood*, at the Stadtgalerie Saarbrücken (Germany) in 2007.

His photos have been published in Art Press, Kunstforum International, as well as in numerous exhibition catalogues and art publications since 1994.

His monograph *IMAGES 1994-1998* was published by Café Crème Editions and the Erna Hécey Gallery in 1999. In 2007, Roger Wagner won the Monika von Boch prize awarded by the Museum Schloß Fellenberg, Merzig (Germany).

www.rogerwagner.org

Nadav Kander born in Israel in 1961, based in London.

Nadav Kander is recognized as one of the most original and highly regarded photographers of our time. His work forms part of the public collection at the National Portrait Gallery and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Kander was born in Israel but grew up in Johannesburg. He began photographing at 13 and later, when drafted into the South African Air Force, worked in the darkroom printing aerial photographs. He moved to London in 1986, where he lives with his wife, Nicole and their three children.

His work appears in publications including The Sunday Times Magazine, Rolling Stone and Dazed & Confused. In 2009, The New York Times Magazine devoted an entire issue to *Obama's People*, his 52 portraits of President Obama's inaugural administration.

Exhibitions include *Obama's People* Flowers Gallery, London (2009), *Obama's People* Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (2009), *Yangtze From East to West*, Flowers Gallery, London (2008), Shanghai Art Museum, China (2006), *Keep your Distance*, Palais de Tokyo (2005).

Among numerous honours, Kander was named International Photographer of the Year at the 7th Annual Lucie Awards in 2009 and received the prestigious Prix Pictet Earth 2009, for his *Yangtze, The Long River* series and Silver Photographer of the Year Award at Lianzhou International Photo Festival 2008 in China. Nadav Kander is represented by Flowers Gallery in London and Pekin Fine Arts in Beijing.

Books: *Beauty's Nothing* (2001), *Night* (2003), *Obama's People* (2009).

www.nadavkander.com

Jim Goldberg, born in 1953, lives and works in San Francisco, USA .

He is a Professor of Art at the California College of Arts and Crafts and a member of Magnum Photos. He has been exhibiting for over 30 years and his innovative use of image and text make him a landmark photographer of our times. He began to explore experimental storytelling and the potentials of combining image and text with *Rich and Poor*, (1977-85), where he juxtaposed the residents of welfare hotel rooms with the upper class and their elegantly furnished home interiors to investigate the nature of American myths about class, power, and happiness.

In "Raised by Wolves" (1985-95), he worked closely with and documented runaway teenagers in San Francisco and Los Angeles to create a book and exhibition that combined original photographs, text, home movie stills, snapshots, drawings, diary entries as well as single and multi-channel video, sculpture, found objects, light boxes and other 3-D elements.

Jim Goldberg's fashion, editorial and advertising work has appeared in numerous publications including W, The New York Times Magazine, Esquire, Rebel and Dazed and Confused. His current project *Open See* is published in 2009 by Steidl and on display at the Photographers' Gallery in London.

His work is in numerous private and public collections including NYMOMA, SFMOMA, Whitney, Getty, LACMA, Corcoran, ...

Among numerous honors, Jim Goldberg has been the recipient of the Prix Henri Cartier-Bresson (2007). He is represented by Pace/MacGill Gallery in New York and the Stephen Wirtz Gallery in San Francisco.

Gast Bouschet (°1958) and **Nadine Hilbert** (°1961), born in Luxembourg, live and work in Brussels, Luxembourg and elsewhere.

Gast Bouschet & Nadine Hilbert, who started collaborating in the 1980s, have since created a complex body of work based on the photographic image. Their practice has been developing into multimedia installations that seamlessly intertwine still and moving imagery.

Bouschet takes and exhibits his photos and videos all over the world since the 1980s, particularly fascinated with the potential of the recorded image as a reflection, a comment and transformation of political and social-economic sign systems, visible within the morphology of urban tissues and border zones. Since 1998 he has worked with Nadine Hilbert, who insured, among others, the sound for projects like *Radio Cosmos* (1998), *This Space Between Us* (2000), *Zona Del Silencio* (2001) and the online project www.thetrustfiles.net.

They participated in numerous group and solo shows including Luxembourg Pavilion, 53rd Venice Biennale 2009, MUDAM, Luxembourg 2008, 2009, Trienal de Luanda, Angola 2007, Camouflage, Brussels, Belgium 2001, 2003, 2005...

www.gast-bouschet.com

TEXTES-STATEMENTS

Eugene Richards - *The Blue Room*

The Blue Room, Eugene Richards's first book in colour, is a moving and eloquent study of the abandoned and forgotten houses of rural America.

Abandoned houses stand mute in out-of-the way places wherever, it's been said, things haven't worked out for people. To those quickly passing by, the timeworn structures can be seen as fearful places, places to avoid. Yet there are those who are inexorably drawn to them. To Eugene Richards, they are heirlooms, evidence of past lives, time machines.

Over the course of three and half years, travelling thousands of miles on the backroads of America., Richards has created a body of photographs that speaks of the beauty of these houses and inspires us to imagine the lives of the people who once lived in them. "As I slowly make my way through the collapsing rooms and begin sifting through what's been left behind," he writes, "the old places spawn what can only be called memories that come and go in the fragments of broken glass, in the convergence of shadows and light, in the dust rising up from the floors."

The Blue Room is a personal journey, a way of seeing, and a meditation on the fragility of life and the transient nature of things.

Justine Blau - *Somewhere Else*

Casting the role of the modern explorer, Justine Blau uses search engines to travel all over the web, gleaning photographs from private and corporate websites, photo-sharing sites and travel blogs, to create a three dimensional installation forming miniature landscapes that sit somewhere between fiction and reality. Her work is concerned with ideas of foreign and exotic, and how those notions are portrayed in the Western world. She is interested in the origins and formations of the enticing imageries we make of far-flung places; considering the role history, politics, culture and the media play in their fabrication. She is interested in photography and how the medium has participated in the creation of those myths, becoming part of our collective awareness by miniaturizing the world on a global scale. The photographs refer to real areas but their random juxtaposition conjure up a simulation of a landscape, a virgin territory yet to be explored. She has also

created a series of miniature domes, which take on aesthetics of a past era, to play with visual archetypes related to a place where demarcations give meaning to a first undefined land.

The artisanal techniques and the optical effect bring us back to panoramas, dioramas and peep-show theatres encountered in the 18th and 19th centuries, creating a dialogue between old illusionary practices and the current virtual and immersive technologies. The miniature landscapes also allude to the world of fiction, make-believe and childhood.

Roger Wagner – *Bruxelles-Heysel*

How and when does nature turn to civilization? The Heysel Park in Brussels, which forms the area around the Atomium, offers several transformational stages and forms. During the 19th century the area consisted of meadows and fields, when Leopold II undertook a vast program of land purchase to enhance the surroundings of the royal palace through urbanization. After his death in 1909, the acquired land was passed on to the state and was used by the Universal Exhibitions of the 1930s and 50s. The Atomium as a symbol of progress and enthusiasm for the sciences is still one of Belgium's biggest tourist attractions. In general, visitors do not notice that the planted area around this landmark is meant to be an independent park. Here and there small wooded areas reveal unspoilt vegetation. In 2004, when I was looking for an ideal setting for shooting with a large format camera I stumbled across these surrounding shrub-lands. The sudden wilderness seemed so unfamiliar to me that I felt the urge to capture this overwhelming impression. Eventually, I found that large scale diasec prints could evoke this initial impression anew. Moreover, the indoor presentation of the photo demonstrates once again the underlying clash of principles: nature versus civilization.

R.W.

Nadav Kander – *Yangtze – The Long River*

Mouth To Source

The Yangtze River, which forms the premise to this body of work, is the main artery that flows 4100 miles across China, travelling from its furthest westerly point in Qinghai Province to Shanghai in the East. The river is embedded in the consciousness of the Chinese – even those who live thousands of miles from the river – playing a pivotal role in both their spiritual and physical life. More people live along its banks than live in the USA: one in every eighteen people on the planet.

The river is a metaphor for constant change. With this series of photographs I worked intuitively, trying not to be influenced by what I already knew about the country. Over time, a formalness and unease began to permeate my pictures. I was responding to a country that feels both at the beginning of a new era, and at odds with itself.

China appears to be severing its roots by destroying its past and moving forward at an astounding and unnatural pace. I felt a complete outsider and explained this pictorially by 'stepping back' and showing humans as small in their surroundings. Common man has little say in China's progression, and this insignificance of the individual is alluded to in the work.

Photographic Migration

China's entire social fabric is affected by the millions of migrant workers that are travelling from rural areas to the cities. I saw parallels here with the 20th Century immigrants who poured off the boats onto American soil. This echoed my own experience of dislocation, as a child born in Israel of Russian and German parentage, growing up in South Africa, and now 're-located' to England. With this in mind, as the work progressed I removed single figures from their found environments and placed them in other locations. Moved into another photograph, into a space not their own, the figures perform a 'photographic migration'. Having already travelled many miles from their homes, they are now twice removed from their natural habitat. Rather than looking to the future with hope, these people appear in limbo, unable to observe their past at a time of uncertain future.

Although it was never my intention to make documentary pictures, the sociological context of this project is very important and ever present. Do we have to destroy to develop? The scale of development in China has left most places unrecognisable. Many Chinese will never be able to revisit the places where they grew up, because they

no longer exist. China is progressing rapidly, and the landscape – both economically and physically – is changing daily. These are photographs that can never be taken again.

N.K.

Jim Goldberg - *Raised By Wolves*

For ten years Jim Goldberg worked closely with and documented runaway teenagers in the streets of San Francisco and Los Angeles. He expanded upon a style of documentary photography using original photographs, text and a variety of other elements such as home-movie stills, family snapshots, drawings, diary entries and discarded belongings. Goldberg's work tells profoundly human stories, looking at the beauty and complexity of human life that persists, despite pervasive forms of social and spiritual poverty. This oeuvre documents the complex ways that people struggle to affirm their dignity and integrity when social circumstance, time and situation work against them. Indeed, the life and death of Tweedy Dave, the protagonist of this work, seem to be a metaphor for the inevitable decline of a society which offers to its youth no other ideal or religion than the act of consuming.

Gast Bouschet & Nadine Hilbert - *Fringe Things [Against Empire]*

The multimedia installation presented on the occasion of the exhibition *Ecotone* is based on photographs and videos recorded on the edge of town, an area where boundaries blur and different realities exist simultaneously. We use video and photography as magical weapons to make new connections between things and reveal hidden worlds. In *Fringe Things [Against Empire]*, the glass towers of our mega-cities meet the micro world of insects and spiders. Different facts of existence unfold at the very same place and time. Our work investigates the unlikely power relations between a corporate building, a praying mantis and a spider. Who is the hunter? Who is the prey? Everything in life is a cut-up. We observe strange and unfamiliar relations and dynamic interaction in an everyday context, but we usually refrain from charging these associations with prophetic meaning. Art is probably the single and most powerful domain in the 21st century which allows us to effectively act out contemporary sorcery. *Fringe Things [Against Empire]* serves as a cinematic spell directed towards the alienating and oppressive powers of the Corporate Empire.

G.B. & N.H.