

La Rivière m'a dit

(The River told me)

24.01–14.04.2019

Press visit, Wenesday 23th january, at 9.30 pm

Opening, Wenesday 23th january, from 6pm to 9pm

**Avec Melanie Bonajo, Charlotte Cherici,
Nashashibi/Skaer, Ben Rivers, Ben Russell, Margaret Salmon**

Curator : Xavier Franceschi



Charlotte Cherici, *Pourquoi tordu ?*, 2018, Collection frac île-de-france © Charlotte Cherici

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Press release

Whether a strange journey to Tahiti following in Gauguin's footsteps, the portrait of a solitary recluse in the middle of the woods philosophising about the origin and fate of mankind, children learning about fauna in a forest setting, a quasi-mythical scene showing a group of men, women and children bathing in a river, portraits of four women defying conventional lifestyles, or recordings and visions of healing ceremonies in the Peruvian Amazon, the exhibition *La Rivière m'a dit* presents a series of works within which nature occupies a prominent place in a variety of ways.

Addressing issues regarding nature inevitably leaves us with a rather grim outlook. The impending ecological disaster is becoming a more unbearable reality by the day, while man is still failing to redefine his vital relationship with the world.

While the exhibition and works do not necessarily take overtly political and ecological stances, *La Rivière m'a dit* is an exhibition that seems to suggest alternative avenues despite being tinged with nostalgia and mirroring a lost paradise.

Consisting exclusively of videos that are mostly from the collection, *La Rivière m'a dit* runs like a long visual poem in the dark spaces of Le Plateau: a lost paradise, or more positively, a providential place for real regeneration.



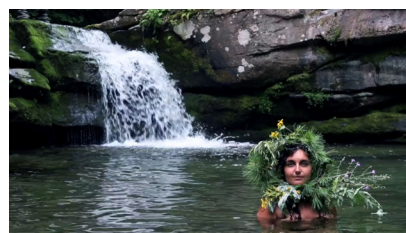


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Notices

Melanie Bonajo was born in 1979 in the Netherlands. She lives and works in New York in the United States. Artist photographer, video artist, musician and performer, she studied at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam and at the ISCP in New York. In her work, the relationship to image gradually evolves into a theatrical dimension through work on the body. Melanie Bonajo therefore questions the impact of our technological world on body policies, issues regarding gender, as well as the role it plays in contemporary feelings of alienation and derealisation. In 2012, she set up the collective Genital International that addresses themes such as 'policy beyond polarity' and 'revolution through relaxation'. The trilogy *Night Soil – Fake Paradise* (2014), *Economy of Love* (2015) and *Nocturnal Gardening* (2016) –reflects a shift that is taking place in our relationship with nature and seeks to resolve existential questions by defying the power structures and values of capitalism.

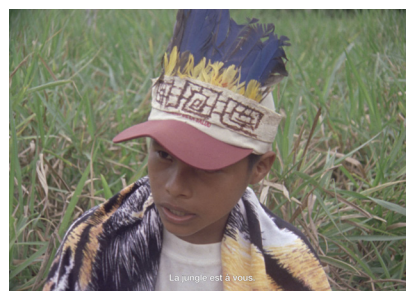
Selected artwork :



Melanie Bonajo
Night Soil - Nocturnal Gardening, 2016
Collection frac île-de-france
© Melanie Bonajo

Charlotte Cherici was born in 1993 in Marseille (France). She recently graduated (2018) with a DNSEP degree in art from the HEAR (Haute école des arts du Rhin). Charlotte Cherici creates films that are often used as a pretext to experience situations. Some of these situations exist before filming enabling her to infiltrate; others are generated purely for the filming. The film production brings about infiltrations, encounters, movement and roleplaying, subject matter for its narrative. This deception, in which the artist is fully engaged, produces recordings that she orders and edits to become not necessarily true or new, political and poetic, individual and collective accounts.

Selected artwork :



Charlotte Cherici
Pourquoi tordu ?, 2018
Collection frac île-de-france
© Charlotte Cherici





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Rosalind Nashashibi is an English artist, born in 1973, who lives and works in London. Film director and painter, her films describe the qualities of experience, things and places. There are several recurring questions in her work: how do we work? How do we take care of one another? How can we navigate our own institutions?

Born in 1975, **Lucy Skaer** lives and works in Glasgow and London. Her multi-faceted work is expressed through sculptures, films, paintings and drawings produced from photographs sourced from newspapers, books and the Internet. Often combining various sources and presented in the form of an installation, her works discuss the meaning of the reproduction and the influence of means of mass communication and issues surrounding memory, history and transmission.

Alongside their individual artistic practices, two artists have sporadically worked in collaboration since 2005 under the name **Nashashibi/Skaer**. Through film production, starting with the history of art and its works of art, the pair explores the developments and transformations that images are subjected to. Through their exhibition project at the Tate St Ives *Thinking Through Other Artists*, the pair addressed the production process of an exhibition as if the idea was to create a work of art. Each of their five films presented in this exhibition (including *Why Are You Angry?*) was combined with a personal selection of historical and contemporary works of art that added new meaning to their work. This overview enabled them to explore and focus on the key ideas of the exhibition, from portrayal of women to the representation of cultures throughout the world through to problems related to political conflicts. Among the artists presented: Paul Gauguin, Henri Matisse, Paul Nash, Pierre Bonnard, Louise Bourgeois, Jo Spence, Lee Miller, Gauri Gill and Rossella Biscotti.



Selected artwork :



Nashashibi / Skaer
Why Are You Angry ?, 2017
Collection frac île-de-france
© Nashashibi / Skaer

Artist and experimental filmmaker **Ben Rivers** was born in 1972 in Somerset, United Kingdom. He lives and works in London. Armed with a Bolex camera, he produces 16 mm film that he hand develops in his studio, preserving resources where the artist controls the whole of the creative process. Use of 16 mm film and chemical manipulation of the film media, the uneven editing and collage of direct and manufactured sound, create strange clashes of time. His films constantly switch between the past and future, history and science fiction. His raw creations provide material that enables him to navigate between these different universes. His films lie on the boundary between ethnographic documentary and fiction.



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Selected artwork :



Ben Rivers
Origin of The Species, 2008
© Ben Rivers

Ben Russell was born in Chicago in the United States in 1976. He lives and works in Chicago. His artistic work encompasses experimental film, photography and exhibition curatorship. He produced a series of films that he is keen to present as experimental ethnography. He is particularly interested in myths and rituals in various societies. His work, in relation with Jean Rouch's film/ethno-fiction, integrates ethnographical elements and critical theories. Through his artistic work (performances, installations and film), Russell explores the history and semiology of moving image and refers to his work as «psychedelic ethnography».



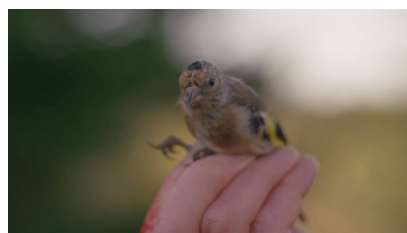
Selected artwork :



Ben Russell
River Rites, 2012
© Ben Russell

Born in 1975 in New York, United States, **Margaret Salmon** lives and works in Glasgow. Her internationally renowned work has been exhibited in several major art events and blends genres, fluctuating between sociological documentary, amateur film and poetic fiction. In spite of their adopted neutrality, the images allude to Margaret Salmon's vision and bring an element of humanity to the natural environment.

Selected artwork :



Margaret Salmon
Bird, 2016
Collection frac île-de-france
© Margaret Salmon



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Journal—Extracts

“

– There's a strange feeling right from the outset. We are between the past and the present, or rather between visions of the past and visions of the present... This 16 mm film, standing out from contemporary digital formats and routinely shifting from black and white to colour, appears to play on this to say the least equivocal, timeless character... Is it a recent film?

– Yes, it dates from 2017. The film is indeed partly based on the potentially ambiguous relationship between the image that we still have in the West of Tahiti – that's where the film was shot – and today's reality. The beginning of the film is as such quite eloquent: it begins with a still frame of an amazing palm tree – in fact a 'ravenala' (Madagascan tree) – that could be perceived as evoking magnificent adornments and other traditional headdresses from South America or New Guinea (...)

– What follows is even more disturbing... We see a domestic scene where two young women pose in turn creating a living tableau of sorts, one of them is naked and lying on her stomach, we see the profile of the other, set back, behind the bed where the first one is, as if assisting the scene...

– It's all the more disturbing as there is a strong feeling of déjà vu...

– It's true...

– The reason for this: the living tableau in question is a faithful reconstruction of a painting by Gauguin called Manao Tupapau that was painted in 1892. (...) A little further on, Arearea novarina ino (1894) is evoked and above all, a piece that gives its title to the film, Why are you angry (No te aha oe riri) (1896) can be observed through an outside scene where we see a group of women gathered in front of a house.

– Why are there reconstructions?

– It is one of the aims of the film, of the trip I was even going to say. (...)

– As a result, is the film the dream of the dream that Gauguin had about Tahiti?

– In a way. Even if the medium used – film – is shaped, is seen (...) as recording reality...

(...)

– It is clear that one thing linking all the films in this exhibition is our relationship with nature. That seems obvious here. A series of birds is presented followed by a full spectrum of trees and foliage. But what is the aim of this?

– I am not sure that there is a specific aim. The film simply adopts a documentary or even scientific tone in the beginning with these birds named through a voiceover by children – it's an inventory, a classification of a particular fauna –, then it switches to another register that could be described as poetical, which subsequently gives it a rather distinct status. (...)

– Is it a metaphor for man's fatal grip on nature?

– I don't think so, it shouldn't be interpreted too literally, even if we cannot help thinking and alluding to that. I think that it is really about, in the first instance, introducing children to a series of birds living nearby, in the surrounding woods. Simultaneously, the author produced another much longer film based on a simple and precise premise: being immersed with children for several days in the forest – in Scotland – so that they are in direct contact with nature, especially with the fauna and flora growing there. It's called Eglantine, after the name of the daughter of the artist participating in the experiment. Here too, on this basis and this direct connection with reality, the work then switches to a sort of fiction...





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(...)

- The beginning of this film shows us a celebration of the Passion in a town in South America – Iquitos, the capital of the Loreto Region in the Peruvian Amazon. This sequence is an uncompromising recording of what happens. This is practically what any tourist could do with their camera or smartphone while watching the event. But what happens next propels us into something else...
- Something that is less recognisable...
- It's true. It is a purification scene performed by a 'tabaquero' (tobacco-using shaman). The tone was set with this Passion and therefore this sphere of belief and religion, we have a different example ...
- Who is this purification for?
- It's very surprising: it is to purify, to heal the camera that is filming...
- Incredible... I remember this exhibition, a few years ago, in this same venue Le Plateau, by the Portuguese pair Gusmão/Paiva: the first film presented showed a witch healing a camera...
- Yes, it was called Benguelino casting a spell on the camera; it was exactly the same vein. Here it's about Ernesto Garcia Torres, a very powerful healer in this town known for being home to many healers and other neo-shamans. The town is incidentally known for this worldwide and attracts many mainly western travellers, who go there in the hope of healing their various woes. Quite a strange sort of community has formed there as a result ... and this gives rise to many ceremonies from which these visitors therefore hope to leave healed and purified. It is partly the purpose of the film.
- The scene that follows is extremely strange... If my understanding is correct, it consists of this kind of ceremony, but it brings together a group of children...
- Indeed. (...) In her research, the female director came across this group of children who were having fun miming the scenes they frequently watched. She simply asked them to re-enact these scenes in front of the camera. A camera that had been finally healed and was capable of recording...
- Consequently, are we witnessing a real healing session?
- Yes, or more precisely we are seeing a few snippets from one of these sessions, in particular through an audio recording. A 'gringo' meets one of these neo-shamans who reveals to him his vision of him that counts as a recommendation for a healthy and better life. A chaperone is there to interpret what the shaman has to say and the artist, who has successfully been accepted into this kind of rather closed circle, therefore records. She likes in this case to claim to be a 'self-proclaimed apprentice anthropologist' ... (...)
- (...) What is interesting and what primarily interested the artist is a very simple question: what is so wrong that people in the north reach out to be healed in this southern country, with the help of this ancestral knowledge that settlers from the western hemisphere virtually eradicated several centuries earlier...?
- It is interesting to see how, in the exhibition, we have this type of backward movement, a return to the past... Gauguin and his primitivism, these lifestyles that set out a return to nature, this notion of lost paradise... Is it an ode to degrowth?

(...)

- Tell me, when did the universe begin?
- Well, it started with the Big Bang...
- And what was there before the Big Bang?
- Nothing... It's hard to imagine 'nothing'. No temporality. It's hard to imagine the absence of time... I always had a lively curiosity and I wandered about evolution for a long time... I was lucky, you know... I worked in the hills - up there in the woods. I chopped down trees among other things. I was always in the midst of nature... And I automatically questioned anything strange and different: why is it like that? How did we get here?

(...)

- Out of all the films this one perhaps most resembles a documentary or even reportage...
- That is true. This four-part film introduces four young women to us who have decided to lead lives that fly in the face of established systems and conventions, norms that have been imposed by our globalised liberal



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society. First of all we meet Mandana, a woman who lives on and in the forest. (...) We then learn about a pig breeder who endeavours to remove animals that she then looks after, from the system of exploitation, or rather extermination, taking place. (...) The third person that we meet is a young woman who has helped to create a shared farm, founded on the principle of cooperative economy, in response to alimentary apartheid that exists in respect of poor, black populations in Albany in the United States. (...) The last woman we are introduced to is a Native American Navajo, Lyla June. She talks about her fight for the recognition of rights and this history of her people, who were murdered, deported by the Yankees in terrible conditions. (...)

- No doubt, it is a political, committed film ecologically speaking... It could be called 'ecological art'... A propaganda film?
- Let's not exaggerate. Committed that's for sure. This is an art film above all.
- There are committed artists...
- Yes, of course and that is certainly true here. But what I wanted to say is that we should not lose sight of the artistic dimension of this series of films. We talked earlier about the documentary aspect. It can also be described as a series of portraits. And portrait means... we know art necessarily incorporates part of reality. Here, a very large part of reality is included, that's certain, but when you look closer, things are much more complicated.
- What does that mean?
- It can also be said that it's acting. The four young women are followed and recorded, of course, but there are also very important moments where they visibly respond to the artist's proposals. And that results in mini-performances as such.



(...)

- Where are we exactly?
- I was going to say 'it doesn't matter. But that's not strictly true... We are on the banks of the Suriname River, in northern Latin America, east of French Guyana. A region inhabited mainly by the Saramacca, descendants of slaves who came from Africa in the 17th century. The area in which the shooting takes place is sacred to them. (...)
- The beauty and curious nature of the film also largely lies in the principle adopted by the author, namely reverse time. We go back in time...
- Yes, this is a well-known process; it generally lends itself well to comical situations. Here it adds an entirely new and extraordinary dimension. We go back in time as we go back up the course of the river. (...)
- What is also great is that even if we figure out this reverse mechanism quite quickly – after a while we are nonetheless taken aback – we are still confused. We follow the action as it unfolds, and at the same time we cannot prevent ourselves from trying to set things straight... What I am seeing actually preceded what I have just seen... It's difficult.
- Yes, and the basis of the long take – apart from a general shot at the start and the very end of the film it is a single unbroken travelling shot – enables the action to be monitored through its fluidity – like the river. All that yes, makes it very disconcerting. But what I like in this confusion, is that it corresponds, for us westerners, with the confusion that can be felt when we are faced with this other notion of life, natural elements endowed with vital force, active mystic spirits, their interactions, etc. Without mentioning the rituals and magical séances entailed.
- The film is accurately called *River Rites*...
- Yes, it is very clear that the author developed his work by integrating this dimension. A dance as well as a trance comes to mind. His film is well and truly magical. (...) ”



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Images available



Melanie Bonajo, *Night Soil - Nocturnal Gardening*, 2016, Collection frac île-de-france, © Melanie Bonajo



Melanie Bonajo, *Night Soil - Nocturnal Gardening*, 2016, Collection frac île-de-france, © Melanie Bonajo



Melanie Bonajo, *Night Soil - Nocturnal Gardening*, 2016, Collection frac île-de-france, © Melanie Bonajo



Charlotte Cheric, *Pourquoi tordu?*, 2018, Collection frac île-de-france, © Charlotte Cheric



Charlotte Cheric, *Pourquoi tordu?*, 2018, Collection frac île-de-france, © Charlotte Cheric



Charlotte Cheric, *Pourquoi tordu?*, 2018, Collection frac île-de-france, © Charlotte Cheric



Nashashibi / Skaer, *Why Are You Angry ?*, 2017, Collection frac île-de-france, © Nashashibi / Skaer



Nashashibi / Skaer, *Why Are You Angry ?*, 2017, Collection frac île-de-france, © Nashashibi / Skaer



Nashashibi / Skaer, *Why Are You Angry ?*, 2017, Collection frac île-de-france, © Nashashibi / Skaer



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Ben Rivers, *Origin of The Species*, 2008,
© Ben Rivers



Ben Rivers, *Origin of The Species*, 2008,
© Ben Rivers



Ben Rivers, *Origin of The Species*, 2008,
© Ben Rivers



Ben Russell, *River Rites*, 2012, © Ben Russell



Ben Russell, *River Rites*, 2012, © Ben Russell



Ben Russell, *River Rites*, 2012, © Ben Russell



Margaret Salmon, *Bird*, 2016, Collection frac île-de-
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Margaret Salmon, *Bird*, 2016, Collection frac île-de-
france, © Margaret Salmon



Margaret Salmon, *Bird*, 2016, Collection frac île-de-
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Events*

Offering you reasons to come back to the plateau during the exhibition time.

› Curator tour

Sunday 10.02.19

5.30pm

with Xavier Franceschi

› Plateau-Apéro*

Wednesday 06.03.19

*in partnership with Cuisine mode d'emploi(s) - Education for catering professions with Thierry Marx

› Late-night openings

Late-night openings, up until 9pm, every 1st Wednesdays of the month, with a guided tour at 7.30 pm

› Guided tours

Every Sunday

4pm

Meet at the reception





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L'homme aux cent yeux (revue)

Artists invest the plateau the time of an evening

Bruno Botella

Thursday 21.02.19

7.30pm

Jean-Luc Blanc

Thursday 14.03.19

7.30pm

La vitrine

Every month, the "Window Display" at l'antenne is home to a new art project linked to le Plateau's exhibitions, collection and educational outreach ventures.



Justin Morin

05.12.2018 - 03.02.2019

Théodora Barat

06.02 - 03.03.19

Opening Wednesday 06.02.19

Claire Trotignon

06.03 - 31.03.19

Opening during the Plateau-Apéro

Wednesday 06.03.19

Anthony Bodin

03.04 - 28.04.2019

Opening Wednesday 03.04.19

L'antenne culturelle

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* Rendez-vous gratuits



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Free entrance

Tube access : Jourdain or Buttes-Chaumont / Bus : line 26

Exhibition open from Wednesday to Sunday, 2pm - 7pm

Late-opening each 1st Wednesday of the month, Plateau-Apéro

L'antenne culturelle

22, cours du 7ème art (50m from the plateau)

75019 Paris

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Director of the frac île-de-france : Xavier Franceschi



Le frac île-de-france reçoit le soutien du Conseil régional d'Île-de-France, du ministère de la Culture – Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles d'Île-de-France et de la Mairie de Paris.

Membre du réseau Tram, de Platform, regroupement des FRAC et du Grand Belleville.