

Barbara Wien

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Eric Baudelaire

A Form that Accommodates the Mess

Opening : Friday, December 9, 2016, 6 - 9 pm

Exhibition : December 10, 2016 - February 18, 2017

Talk between Eric Baudelaire, Anselm Franke and Dennis Lim February 10th, 2017, 6 pm

It is necessary to confront vague ideas with clear images.

Jean-Luc Godard, *La Chinoise*, 1967

For his first exhibition with Galerie Barbara Wien, the artist and filmmaker Eric Baudelaire chooses to not present any of his films, nor works documenting them, but rather the non-filmic facet of his very diverse work.

As an artist, Baudelaire is an autodidact. After studying political and social sciences, he found with the arts, a discipline where uncertainty, doubt, and even humour are possibilities to enable thinking about the world in the sense meant by Samuel Beckett, who defined the task of the artist as finding *a form that accommodates the mess*. Most of the six exhibited projects could have been starting points for potential films, but they found a more suitable, and economic form in photographs, letters etc..

Site displacement / Déplacement de site is one such a project. In 2006, the city of Clermont-Ferrand in France commissioned Baudelaire to realize a series of photographs dealing with the notion of "territory". After having photographed landscape in and around the city, he decided to sub-commission Anay Mann, an Indian artist, to re-make his series of photographs in India. Clermont-Ferrand is known for being the fiefdom of the tire manufacturer Michelin, which in recent times has been opening factories in India, pursuing the de-industrialisation of the area. The company's offshoring process is somehow duplicated in Baudelaire's gesture: the commissioned artist 'outsourced' another artist to realise a twin work abroad, projected here in a mirrored vis-à-vis. We can read this also as a reference to the filmmaker Masao Adachi and his "landscape theory" (*fukeiron* in Japanese). According to this theory Adachi turns the camera to the landscape (rather than to the subject) to decipher political structures. Baudelaire has been collaborating with the Japanese film director and has reflected on this theory in previous films. For his upcoming film *Also Known as Jihadi*, he strictly uses Adachi's landscape theory. Baudelaire films the landscapes a man has crossed during his journey from France to Syria, and back to France, where he is currently incarcerated for his participation in Jihadism. The film *Also Known as Jihadi* will premiere at the Witte de With, Rotterdam, in January, and will be discussed at Galerie Barbara Wien on the 10th of February 2017 at 6 pm, during a talk between Baudelaire, Anselm Franke and Dennis Lim.

With *Chanson d'Automne* (2009) the relocation of the landscapes becomes a displacement between times. Baudelaire collected several articles of *The Wall Street Journal* from September 2008 which published catastrophic headlines commenting on the critical stage of the subprime mortgage crisis. Baudelaire deciphered and circled the first verses of Paul Verlaine's poem *Chanson d'Automne* (1866), which were broadcasted on the BBC as a coded message for the French resistance announcing the forthcoming Invasion of Normandy during World War II. *Chanson d'Automne* (2009) is a poetic and quite facetious re-reading of a business-focused newspaper, questioning the possibility of resistance in the face of 2008's financial doomsday.

With *Ante-Memorial* (2011-2016) Baudelaire continues to toy with time, though a speculative one. He started in 2011 by writing an email addressed to Margaret Thatcher, requesting for the content of the *letters of last resort* to be unveiled. These are four letters handwritten by each prime minister of the United Kingdom containing orders on what action to take in case London is destroyed in a nuclear strike. These letters are kept in safes onboard Britain's four nuclear submarines. They are destroyed, unopened, after each prime minister leaves office. Baudelaire proposes to build a memorial made up of this correspondence addressed to a hypothetical future. Thus, an "ante-memorial" of paper is dedicated to a historical event that has never (or not yet) happened, growing with the succession of prime ministers and their replies. The last reply Baudelaire got was a letter from the House of Commons on behalf of David Cameron dated 5th September 2016. As always the letter's content remains secret. The author ends his letter with the following saying : "After all, if you wish another to keep your secret, first keep it yourself".

By using and overlapping time, many of Baudelaire's projects have an unfixed nature, still in progress, much alike this Filliou-esque memorial described above. In that regard, *Everything is Political (II)* (2016) ironically comments on most of the exhibited works. Baudelaire has gathered numerous books under the shared title of *Unfinished Business*. It is a performative sculpture in a literal sense, a work which will not end until writers keep on using this title. Furthermore, *Everything is Political* is a matrix for a possible performance: within specific events the visitors are asked to read the closing sentence of each of these "unfinished business" books from a sculpture still in progress.

Some tomorrows started in 2005 and stands as another unfinished collection, but of fragments gleaned from the French newspaper *Le Monde*. The daily paper is published around midday with the date of the following day. For instance in this exhibition, the two issues released on the 5th of August 2015 and the 12th of November 2015 successively show the 6th of August (memorial day of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima) and the 13th of November (Paris' terror attacks). Pictures found in these issues have been selected, reframed and cut off from their textual contexts, which have been reduced to a compact block in the background. Operations of decontextualisation are literally made by the artist to question images' tellings.

Baudelaire puts his compiled documents in doubt, thus questioning the fragility of medias along with what they convey. Be it the newspapers, the filmic images, the photographic recordings, the official discourses, books or scientific diagrams, he interrogates, by the means of aesthetic displacements, rearrangements or hijacks, their authoritarian, legitimate or truthful natures.

Even though of an artistic ambition, hijacking operations inevitably lead us to terrorist imaginary. *FRAEMWROK FRMAWREOK FAMREWROK...* (2016) is another of Baudelaire's compilations of displaced documents. Here, diagrams, graphs, charts and curves attempt to analyse or even define terrorism, a polysemous and controversial term which lacks an accepted and shared definition. Extracted from their context and gathered into a multitude, these documents form an almost abstract patterned wallpaper. Baudelaire sees an aesthetic value in this muddled conundrum while somehow making a tribute to the human initiative for trying to understand beyond understanding, for attempting to give contours to silent disarray.

Gauthier Lesturgie

Eric Baudelaire was born in Salt-Lake City, USA in 1973. He lives and works in Paris. Baudelaire has had numerous international exhibitions including solo shows at the Ludwig Forum, Aachen, Germany (2015), the Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany (2014), the Bergen Kunsthall, Norway (2014), the Beirut Art Centre, Lebanon (2013), or the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, USA (2010). Baudelaire has also taken part in various international group exhibitions, for example at the Biennale de Montréal, Canada (2016), the Sharjah Biennial, UAE (2015), Yokohama Triennial, Japan (2014), 8th Taipei Biennial, Taiwan (2012) and at La Triennale, Paris, France (2012).

Several of his films and installations are part of international museums' collections such as The Museum of Modern Art in New York, USA; the Museo Reina Sofia in Madrid, Spain; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA and the Centre Pompidou in Paris, France.

He has been the recipient of numerous prizes both for his films and exhibition works including the Sharjah Biennial 12 prize (2015), the SeMA-HANA Award, Mediacity in Seoul, South Korea (2014) and the Special Jury Prize at DocLisboa Festival, Portugal (2012 and 2014).

In January 2017 he will have a solo exhibition at Witte de With in Rotterdam titled *The Music of Ramón Raquel and his Orchestra* exhibiting his new film *Also Known as Jihadi*. The film will be also shown in September on the occasion of Baudelaire's solo show at Centre Pompidou in Paris titled *Après*. Baudelaire has been selected to exhibit at the Whitney Biennial 2017 in New York (March - June 2017).

On the 10th of February 2017 at 6 pm, a discussion will be hosted at Galerie Barbara Wien between Eric Baudelaire, Anselm Franke and Dennis Lim about Baudelaire's position between cinema and visual arts. Anselm Franke is a critic and curator based in Berlin. He is notably Head of Visual arts and Films at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt and curated the 8th Taipei Biennial in 2012. Dennis Lim is a writer and journalist living in New York. He is Director of Programming at the Film Society of Lincoln Center as well as a member of the selection committee of the New York Film Festival.