

CENTRE
RÉGIONAL DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE
HAUTS-DE-FRANCE

CRP/

PRESS RELEASE

GEOF OPPENHEIMER

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF BODIES AKA THE NIGHT SHIFT

MARCH 9 2019

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The political economy of bodies aka the night shift
 march 9 . . . may 26 2019

Press visite

friday march 8 2018 / 1pm
 in the presence of the artist and the curator

Inauguration

saturday, march 9 2018 / 12:30pm
 in the presence of the artist and the curator

Free admission

tuesday . . . friday
 1pm . . . 5pm
 saturday, sunday, public holidays
 2pm . . . 6pm

Télérama Museums Weekend

Guided tour. When you present a Télérama pass, receive a tote bag with gifts and discounts on our publications and art library memberships.
 saturday march 23 et sunday march 24 / 3pm

Nuit des Musées [Museums Night]

Nighttime opening of the gallery. Meet BijaRi, the Brazilian artists' collective in residency at the CRP//
 saturday may 19 / 5pm - 10pm

Screening

of the movie Holy Motors de Leos Carax. Geof Oppenheimer's carte blanche, held in partnership with Labo de l'Univers.
 tuesday april 2 / 7pm
 pay what you want
Cinéma l'Univers
 16 rue Georges Danton
 59000 Lille

Finissage

with Marie Maertens, art critic and curator, specializing in the American scene and Muriel Enjalran curator of the exhibition. Free admission
 saturday may 24 / 2pm

THE COLLECTIVE IS INITIALLY BORN IN EACH OF US

For twenty years, the American artist Geof Oppenheimer—for whom this is his first solo exhibition in France—has been analyzing not only the nature of our social relations, but how these relations intersect with the world's political and economic issues. Through mediums like sculpture, video, drawing and photography, makes work about communities interacting, as they either collapse or help each other, in continual instability. He attempts to establish a new dialogue, before changing the visitor's perspective in a second phase.

Furthermore, whatever the medium used by this visual artist who was born in Washington DC and studied in California, he always views it as "sculpture", because it enables him to go further in sharing an experience with his viewer. Among the works in the exhibition, the photographs entitled *The Therapy of Groups* fit the very broad definition he gives to that medium, "resulting from manipulation of what constitutes the world". In the 1960s, conceptual artist Frank Stella was one of the first to write: "What you see is what you see", raising the big question of representation and illusionism in art. We see imposing prints here, displaying elegant hand gestures. These were orchestrated with dancers under the direction of Geof Oppenheimer, who considers this series emblematic of the ideas he has been exploring since his early days. "I mainly work on the relations that govern behavior and actions in our society, studying how solidarity, conflict, love, hatred or heroism connect. I don't just explore the working world, even if that's still often the one where human interactions can end up being strongest. How is it that employees who are forced to battle each other in a highly competitive climate are also capable of great solidarity? That's almost the definition of modern capitalism, in which different classes can unite to fight another one together... All the more so given that we live in a constant state of flux and sometimes in total contradiction, something I try to show in a formal and esthetic vocabulary." These meticulous photos, those attached, joined, released hands, can therefore inspire at first, purely visual interpretation, or subsequently lead to social, political and economic subjects.

If Geof Oppenheimer's works are 2D and 3D creations, at the same time they prove to be "reflection processes". An initial idea is always followed by numerous drawings, which are either considered studies, or are accepted as completed works, such as those at the CRP/. These are grouped in a section the artist has named "The Drawing Room" (a term that refers to a certain preciousness, but also to intimacy), where they are presented alongside a selection of images the artist made from the archive of the CRP. In dialogue with Geof Oppenheimer's abstract shapes or structured collages—pencil or paint strokes to which he has added slogans or images—we see replies in form of black and white or color photos. Those of Claude Dityvon, who became known for immortalizing the student revolt of May 1968, show scenes of crowds, in motion or dancing... always dynamic. Whereas Alain Leray, who was born into a family of mine workers, was fascinated by the Carnaval de Denain or by afternoons spent watching soccer matches at Douchy-les-Mines. And Jean-Pierre Parmentier recreates roams on the beaches of the northern coast... Having visited the Hauts-de-France region well before his exhibition, Geof Oppenheimer often reminds us that there are a number of similarities between the economic situations of northern

France and Midwestern America. With this in mind, he also created a new in situ work, created more specifically in connection with those issues relating to social division and the end of a certain financial system. *Money Decades* is a sculpture made of aluminum, the same material once used for the Lincoln Town Car, one of a series of luxury sedan models that accompanied the active middle class beginning in 1948, and ceased being produced about ten years ago. For Oppenheimer, this material—of which he offers a version consisting of balanced girders—speaks to a type of capitalism called “late capitalism”. For some theorists, this term inspires the idea that the end is near for this dominant system, which has been controlling us since the Glorious Thirty. It is also amusing to note that when one searches for a definition of the term on Google, it is illustrated by a photo of Donald Trump and his wife Melania lordling over Manhattan in their high-rise apartment...

After studying economics, Geof Oppenheimer began an apprenticeship in sculpture at the University of California, Berkeley, where he was taught by Charles Ray before working in his studio as an assistant. He therefore has intimate knowledge of the practices of the California school, which includes illustrious members like Paul McCarthy and Mike Kelley, whom he views as paternal figures, who have had a certain influence that can be found in his generous, baroque, even surrealist forms. The Californians have been the most critical of American excesses, whether in finance, the media, consumerism or sex, but Geof Oppenheimer wants to carry the responsibilities art can engender even further: “It is made to understand the meaning of the modern world. I use it as a tool in the reorganization of vision, in an almost linguistic way, and when you give a new configuration to things, you confer a new meaning on them.” Furthermore, sculpture shares the viewer’s personal space, unlike painting, which remains in a closed world. Thus, he does not hesitate to characterize his work as “hyperrealism”, in its confrontation of today’s social conditions, in order to articulate them differently. His chosen title for the exhibition, *The Political Economy of Bodies AKA the Night Shift*, testifies to the fact that everything acquires the status of a measurement or a marketable tool, even our mortal coil, all the more in this era of more and more freelance workers, doing fluctuating hours or caught in the 24-hour shift system, working themselves to death in factories.

In Europe and the United States, it was in the 19th century that industrialization developed, giving rise to the laboring class, and it is easy to understand why this period particularly fascinates Geof Oppenheimer. In 2017, he even curated an exhibition entitled *The Hysterical Material*, showing the work of Bruce Nauman, another Californian visual artist, alongside that of Auguste Rodin. Because a modern definition of the artist’s profession appeared at that point in history, when Honoré de Balzac spent his days and nights factually describing the evolution of the society of his time. Oppenheimer is one of his avid readers, admiring the precise wording of this relentless worker, who was practically a laborer... The 19th century also had that natural tendency to permit the emergence of all styles, from the most romantic—even esoteric—to realism and the search for truth. Pursuing this line, Geof Oppenheimer is one of the few visual artists, in the United States or anywhere else, to position himself so firmly in the analysis

of economic intricacies within a practice that is highly assertive formally. He does not follow in the footsteps of relational esthetics or a tradition that appeals to the public through performance. Nevertheless, his work tends to link intellectual reflection with physical experience, but as it is individually felt by each of us before embracing a collective destiny. "My passion is really to understand how the environmental structure defines a man," he concludes, and this search is never conducted alone...

Marie Maertens, art critic and curator.

GEOF OPPENHEIMER

Born in 1973, from California, lives and works in Chicago.

Geof Oppenheimer's practice takes up questions of civic value, the ways in which political and social structures are encoded in images and objects and how meaning is formed in the modern world. Starting from the proposition that formal value is a social value, his projects interrogate the forms and rules of civic discourse as a material, positing art as a space of liberated social dialogue. Trained as a sculptor, Oppenheimer works across multiple mediums including stage set video productions, and photography.

His work has been exhibited nationally and internationally at a variety of venues such as Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, PS1/MOMA, Institute for Contemporary Art VCU, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, SITE Santa Fe, The Indianapolis Museum of Art, The Aspen Art Museum, The 4th Athens Biennale and CAB Art Center, Brussels. His work has been the subject of published writings in Art in America, The Wall Street Journal, The Chicago Tribune and The New Yorker. He studied at the Maryland Institute, College of Art where he received his BFA and received an MFA from the University of California, Berkeley. He also studied at the Academia voor Beeldende Vorming in the Netherlands. Geof Oppenheimer is an Associate Professor of Practice in the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Chicago and lives and works in Chicago, Illinois.

<http://inthisdayandage.net>

Works presented at the CRP/

Money Decades, 2018-19, extruded aluminum, cables, and automotive headlamps (Lincoln Town Car, Generation 3), unit 1 18x4.5x363 cm / unit 2 18x4.5x335.5 cm, CRP/ production © Geof Oppenheimer

The Therapy of Groups, 2017-18, pigment prints, steel, paint, neodymium magnets and adhesive tapes, 168,9x119,3 cm © Geof Oppenheimer

The Therapy of Groups, 2017-18, pigment prints, steel, paint, neodymium magnets and adhesive tapes, 170,18x121,9 cm © Geof Oppenheimer

The Therapy of Groups, 2017-18, pigment prints, steel, paint, neodymium magnets and adhesive tapes, 165x121,9 cm © Geof Oppenheimer

The Therapy of Groups, 2017-18, pigment prints, steel, paint, neodymium magnets and adhesive tapes, 171,4x123,8 cm © Geof Oppenheimer

The Therapy of Groups, 2017-18, pigment prints, steel, paint, neodymium magnets and adhesive tapes, 162,5x132 cm © Geof Oppenheimer

Drawings :

Untitled, 2017, 26.5x31.7 cm

Bathed in fiery answers, 2015, 29.2x24.6 cm

Messianic Responsibilities, 2018, 26.8x22 cm

Spiritual Independenc, 2016, 38.8x56, cm

Traumatized by sociability, 2018, 31.6x24.6 cm

Untitled, 2018, 25x22 cm

The unbearable lightness of lightness, 2017, 28.2x27.6 cm

Bases, 2019, 27.7x27 cm

Untitled, 2018, 30.8x27.8 cm

Photo from the CRP/ collection :

Dityvon, « Humeurs de la ville », Sans titre, 1985-1986, 26,2 x 39 cm, CRP/ collection

Dityvon, « Au-delà des apparences », Sans titre, 1989, 19,3 x 29,5 cm, CRP/ collection

Dityvon, « Au-delà des apparences », Sans titre, 1989, 19,3 x 29,5 cm, CRP/ collection

Hugues Heraud, Attente au manège, Onnaing, 24 x 33,3 cm, CRP/ collection

Alain Leray, « Blancs-Moussis », Carnaval de Denain, 1982, 23,7 x 29,7 cm,
CRP/ collection

Alain Leray, Le sportif amoureux, Douchy-les-Mines, 24,2 x 30,2 cm,
CRP/ collection

Jean-Pierre Parmentier, « Littoral », Berck, 1984, 20 x 30 cm, CRP/ collection



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Geof Oppenheimer,
Money Decades, 2018-19, CRP/
 production.
 © Geof Oppenheimer



Geof Oppenheimer,
The Therapy of Groups, 2017-18
 © Geof Oppenheimer



Geof Oppenheimer,
The Therapy of Groups, 2017-18
 © Geof Oppenheimer





↗
Geof Oppenheimer,
The unbearable lightness of lightness (detail),
2017.
© Geof Oppenheimer

Le CRP/

The CRP/ Centre régional de la photographie, based in Douchy-les-Mines, develops art centre missions in the field of photography and contemporary images.

In the visual arts sphere, art centres are essential actors promoting the creation of contemporary art and its distribution in France and abroad. Their primary purpose is to support artists by helping them conduct research produce their works, and by transmitting and distributing this art research to the wider public, by means of innovative mediation tools.

Founded in 1982, the CRP/ grew out of a collective of photographers who came from the photo club of the Usinor Denain Work Council. As a mobile association at the time, the CRP spent four years developing exhibitions and organising photography competitions. In 1983, in connection with its photographic commissions and its production of works, the Ministry of Culture recognised the CRP's art library, which became the first of its kind in France in the field of photography. In 1986, the CRP/ moved in to a former post office made available by the town of Douchy-les-Mines, and in 1991 the Ministry of Culture recognised it as a national art centre.

As a centre that supports creativity, at the outset it developed a project to commission works linked with its territory: the Mission Photographique Transmanche (1988 to 2006), which lay the foundations of its collection. This has since been supplemented through the art centre's programme and productions. The CRP/ is one of the few art centres endowed with a collection directly linked to its own production activity.

The CRP/ collection currently contains 9,000 works, with an art library offering the public over 500 works that may be borrowed. Linked to its significant publication activity, it also has a document collection of over 8,000 books.

The CRP's activities include creative support, research, production, distribution and mediation, all of which is developed in a region that is marked by its industrial past, an area that showed a very early commitment to culture. Today the CRP/ is a place of experience transmission, awareness-raising, mediation and training in the field of images, with a trans-regional and national reputation.

The CRP's artistic and cultural vision, championed by its current director Muriel Enjalran, endeavours to be forward-looking, encouraging young artists through its research and support mission, keeping in mind the regional history of images to which its collection testifies. It is regionally rooted while also giving attention to other art scenes abroad, through invitations to artists who come and shift or renew visitors' perceptions of their history and region, and provide access to other cultural and societal issues in the world.

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