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RÉGIONAL DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE
HAUTS-DE-FRANCE

CRP/

PRESS RELEASE

CLIO SIMON OÏKOS

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OÏKOS

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Free admission

tuesday ... friday

1pm ... 5pm

saturday / sunday / public holidays

2pm ... 6pm

Geography of Possibilities

What should we care about? With which tools should we (re)construct? How should attention be given? Which point of view—or rather which point of life¹—should we make our own? In order to repair, or also and especially, to imagine. This exhibition, entitled *Oïkos* (a set of goods and people attached to one same place of habitation and production), invites us to settle in, to take the time to see in the dark, to find the right distance for observing to world in which we live, or attempt to live.

Forms of loving lives

Una storia d'amore (24 min., 2019), film tourné à Rome en 2018, est le portrait d'un lieu, ou plutôt d'un microcosme : Forte Prenestino. Ce lieu est autogéré depuis les années 80, et se situe dans la périphérie de la capitale italienne. La vie s'y organise, se construit de manière autonome, selon le principe des *beni comuni* (*les biens communs*)², in a dual-aspect space that challenges private property, liberal individualism and enslavement to state authority. It is a playground for Clio Simon, who sometimes adopts an anthropologist's gestures as she films, knowing to remain discreet, thanks to fairly wide static shots, to perspectives, to expectations. The editing is above all observationally sensitive, semi-phenomenological, affectionate at some times, incisive at others.

1. The expression "point of life" is borrowed from the thought of Emanuele Coccia (*La Vie des plantes*, 2016). It is also used in *Terra Forma / Manuel de cartographies potentielles*, Frédérique Ait-Touati, Alexandra Arènes, Axelle Grégoire, 2019.

2. The *bene comune* movement has been developing in Italy for over 30 years, inspiring an alternative way of conceiving of relations between law, politics, property and sovereignty. See for example Dardot Pierre and Laval Christian, 2014, *Commun. Essai sur la révolution au XXI^e siècle*, Paris, La Découverte.

3. As an epigraph to her film, Clio Simon quotes from Marielle Macé's *Nos cabanes* (Verdier, 2019), a book she had at her side her during the editing of the film. When the artist places quotations at the heart of her film-objects, these are at once clues and thresholds for the viewer. These references establish the film's theoretical position, and show a belief in research in motion, inviting the participation of the social sciences, philosophy, literature, astronomy and other fields.

Watching that film, I am reminded of *Operai, Contadini* (*Workers, Peasants*, 2001) by Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub, shot in a Tuscan glade: men and women speak, barely moving, in a green agora. They speak of an old song, that of work, that of the old *res rustica*. They speak of survival and poetry. We are in the aftermath of the Second World War, and this meeting in the woods is a way of relearning everyday gestures, of reading together, in order to imagine how to live together again. This film comes to mind because Clio Simon knows how to give time to perspective, with the same federative and political concern as Huillet and Straub: from the surrounding nature to the simplest gestures. Because in her work it is a study—in a spirit of friendship—of the life developing before her eyes. With *Una storia d'amore*, the love story the filmmaker tells us is that of a "loving Us"³, capable of conceiving of common life in its most fruitful sense. This *Us* is that of "life forms", according to a broadened conception of multi-species life—plural, metamorphic life, at once human, animal, vegetable, inrathin, under constant imaginative evolution, and in harmony with authentic, endlessly migrating life.

So it is lovingly that she first films leaves, trees, fruits, a pomegranate revealing its pink seeds, the wings of a butterfly, a spider web. Filming around the place while respecting it, while caring for it. Spending several minutes on a mural fresco where we encounter clues: over here ITALO CALVINO in capital letters, over there Rimbaud's canonical face. The sound work is musical and

experimental in order to better accompany the view, for example while getting close to hands cutting fresh garlic for supper, or the arms of someone preparing leaflets for a night party, on which one can read: “A FESTA LA FAI ANCHE TU ! » / “YOU COME AND PARTY TOO”. The camera films *follow land*, in the sense in which Gilles Clément uses the term: that “living space left to the free development of the species making their home there”⁴. Here, gardening renews politics, just as beekeeping, following a cat or listening to birds become silent means of communication. For a “poetry of signs [...] to the point of perceiving their possibilities”, writes the attentive filmmaker. And she is right to remind us: “a place is a power of suggestion”.

Towards the harmony of the spheres

In 2009, Clio Simon travelled to Chile for the first time. This memorable trip gave rise to several films. *La Nãña* (5 min., 2012) is the striking portrait of a Mapuche woman near a crackling forest fire. The old woman gives an account of the police violence she suffered under Pinochet’s dictatorship⁵. “They’re the terrorists, they violated all our human rights, all the rights of women and the elderly”: we hear her gentle voice recounting the tragedy without ever seeing her face. She tells of just struggles and of the revolts that will still need to be launched to reclaim despoiled lands, those that should be sown for the sake of living and not for trading, those which belong to no one, when all is said and done. For Clio Simon, this portrait is a way of giving the sense that another way of living is possible, through self-management and the emancipation of populations. Still in Chile, *Le Bruissement de la parole* (17 min., 2013) was filmed in the Atacama Desert, to better convey the catastrophe, since the landscape has retained its invisible traces, silenced memories and smothered words, frozen by time and historical oblivion. The film is gradually populated by the thousands of ghosts of people killed and secretly buried in the dry land during the dictatorship.

The images shot by the artist in Chile continue to innervate her practice, enabling her to keep presenting those clouds of smoke or dust that have become similar to a recurring character and act as powerful image developers. Thus the film *Géographie de l’ineffable* is a film that opposes shots captured in the Atacama Desert in 2012 and images filmed in the mining area of northern France in 2020. “No image is born in darkness”, says the voiceover during the film’s lunar prologue: a part withdrawn from the eyes persists, like the song of the stars, to create films that are never explanatory, but instead open windows of meaning, to create roamed, open stories. By the same token, the sound composition rejects illustration, as the filmmaker explains: “I film silently and later consider the necessary dialogue between image and sound. The digressions that can result from this give form to silent landscapes, loquaciously offering signs that seem to dilate history into strata”.

4. Gilles Clément, on his website:
<http://www.gillesclement.com/cat-mouvement-tit-Le-Jardin-en-Mouvement>

5. Following a coup on 11 September 1973, Pinochet’s military dictatorship seized power in Chile, after having overthrown Salvador Allende’s democratically elected government.

If the desert horizon never stops oscillating in the haze of heat, this is in order to better remind us that the ineffable is “that which cannot be expressed through words”. And that we must “relearn how to see”, despite the missing images, even if that necessitates a commitment and a responsibility. Also, if the young woman in the film draws a circle on the ground, this is to create the ritual site within which she will be able to dance, inhabiting the void in a harmonic dialogue with the cosmos. Her own dance on her witch’s circle is that of the dervishes, whose circular movements, amplified by the fullness of their skirts, are controlled by the power of Coriolis, the driving force behind hurricanes. The film’s mystery will remain complete, because it is located precisely where digression becomes a way of not understanding *everything*, accepting the lacuna of what cannot be said. By making a digression, one believes one is departing from the main subject, while being at the beating heart of the question. Because what Clio Simon is doing here is restoring a kind of knowledge that we thought was lost: the knowledge of depths and nebula, the rediscovered knowledge of the “harmony of the spheres” advocated by Pythagoreans, who believed that the geography of the universe and planets was the fruit of a mathematical and musical perfection.

The same applies to a belief in *possibilities*. In order to reinvent ways of living and breathing, in harmony with the environment, without wanting to fight against it, without any desire for domination, outside of any rationally normed logic. This is precisely where the cinematographic work is political, in that it is based on the desire to bring turbulence back into thought, that is to say a fruitful, unsettling restlessness, a disorder infused with light, like a star roaming the atmosphere.

Léa Bismuth, independent art critic and curator

CLIO SIMON

Born in 1984 , lives and works in Lille.

After studying at the Beaux-Arts in Lyon, Clio Simon studied at Lyon 2 and Paris VIII History of Art and Cinema, then at the National Studio of Contemporary Arts in Fresnoy, with the collaboration of IRCAM, Center Pompidou in 2015.

In his works, Clio Simon develops the idea that men not only live in society but are constantly making society in order to live. Imagination and reality are intrinsically linked to question the very foundations of our societies.

Artist-author Clio Simon deploys poetic-political energy in the creation of resolutely hybrid works of documentary character.

Clio Simon invests in a complementary and transversal manner the fields of video installation, cinema and social sciences in a multidisciplinary and collaborative approach.

His works are projected on the screens of international events such as Hors Pistes-Ircam / Center Pompidou, Festival du Nouveau Cinéma de Montréal (Canada), Instants vidéos (Marseille), Centquatre (Paris), Festival Iberoamericano surrealidades (Colombie), Fresnoy Studio national des arts contemporains, CRAC (Chili), Galerie Jeune Création, Galerie Maubert.

www.cliosimon.com

Works presented at the CRP/:

La Ñaña, 5 min., Chile, 2012.
Production: Clio Simon

Le Bruissement de la parole, 18 min20., Chile, 2013
Production: Clio Simon, Soundtrack: Claudio Merlet

Una storia d'amore, 24 min., Italy, 2019
Balade sauvage production, with the support of the region Hauts-de-France and the city of Lille.
Originale soundtrack: Rosa Parlato

Géographie de l'ineffable, 12 min, 2020
Production: CRP/ Centre régional de la photographie Hauts-de-France
Coproduction: Le Fresnoy – Studio national des arts contemporains
With the support of the SCAM «Brouillon d'un rêve», Pictanovo - Région Hauts-de-France
Actress: Carine Goron.



Clio Simon
Still of the film *Géographie de l'ineffable*, 12 min,
2020







Clio Simon
Le Bruissement de la parole 18 min, 2020



Clio Simon
La Ñaña, 5 min, 2012



The 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.

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 300 works that may be borrowed. Linked to its significant publication activity, it also has a document collection of over 8000 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, 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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