

PRESS RELEASE

Esprit urbain

Bruno Barbey, Édouard Boubat, Chervine, Thierry Cohen, Stéphane Couturier, Dinah Diwan, Jérôme Dubois, Michael von Graffenried, Gail Halbert Halaban, Léon Herschtritt, Simone Kappeler, Algimantas Kezys, Thomas Klotz, Youcef Krache, Jason Langer, Marc Riboud, Kourtney Roy, Stephen Shames, Takeshi Shikama, Louis Stettner, Arthur Tress

Exhibition 28.10.2021 – 24.12.2021

Opening Thursday 28 October 2021, from 5pm to 8pm
36 rue Falguière
75015, Paris

Text :
Elisa Bernard

"The city exists as a mass and is scattered in grains, in gramen, but what raises and raises these grains, beats them, makes them spin, is the luminous palpitation of the beings who walk through it, these are the paths themselves"

Jean-Christophe Bailly

Each of the works in the "Urban Spirit" exhibition is one of those grains of which Jean-Christophe Bailly speaks. A receptacle of germinating potentialities, which are all experiences of the city ready to bloom.

Through the works of twenty-one artists, this exhibition asks the question of what the 'life' of a city is. Whether panoramic or fragmented, the image of urban space is constantly charged with life, even when humans are not involved.

The city is a body, with its nervous system and its members, which, like every being, is traversed by the astonishing paradox of being inhabited by stability and movement, identity and change. It is a plurality, a community of destinies and subject to the vagaries of the lives that inhabit it.

It is in this confrontation with this other that is the urban space that the works exhibited are inscribed. Whether it is the setting or the subject of the work, the city is this mass of blurred and elusive contours with which we are confronted, including non-townspeople. For the contemporary city is overflowing and constantly spreading according to an agglutinative logic.

The "Urban Spirit" exhibition is thus structured around works that capture the different ways of being in a city. From Beirut to New York, via Paris, Seoul and Algiers, the cities tell their own stories and give us a glimpse of what drives them.

The city thus becomes a playground for rebellious teenagers, under the lens of Stephen Shames in New York, and for young children immortalised by Édouard Boubat in a Parisian garden.

It makes one dream big when contemplated with grace by Louis Stettner. At other times, it is in waiting, in retreat, allowing its inhabitants to emerge timidly from the urban opacity, as in the street scenes captured by Chervine.

In Dinah Diwan's work, the city is this time cobbled together and adopts the contours of an emotional cartography.

Giving the city a chance to tell its own story also means allowing it to express itself in a confrontation with the radical nature of architecture. Whether they become pictorial motifs in the work of Stéphane Couturier and Youcef Krache, or lace the sky and the asphalt in the work of Jason Langer and Algimantas Kezys, buildings construct the syntax of urban space.

Other artists, such as Kourtney Roy and Michael von Graffenried, wanted to show the city as the theatre of absurd situations, in which humans are at odds with the urbanity that surrounds them.

The entry into what makes a city pulsate can also take place on the scale of windows or large bay windows, as is the case in the voyeuristic images of Gail Halbert Halaban.

The image of a city can also show what cannot be seen, as when Thierry Cohen captures the light pollution that masks the stars above Paris.

At other times, the city suggests the possibility of escape. These few suspended moments, as Arthur Tress shows, seem to tell us that it is possible to escape from its tumult.

Jean-Christophe Bailly, *La phrase urbaine*, Paris, Seuil, 2013 :

The city: behind the generic use of this name always looms, more or less, and whether we like it or not, the ghost of a lost ideal, undoubtedly imaginary, but which every founding gesture tends to revive. The Greek city, the founder of democracy, of the idea of democracy, or the medieval city which, as a model of itself, could be held in the palm of one hand, offered to the omnipresent God whose temple it had in its bosom, or the classical city insofar as it was the paradise and paradigm of self-representation, or also the caravanserai city, the oasis, the medina, the imperial city with the checkerboard plan of the ancient Far East... In all cases, with or without walls, according to their distinct features and with the conflicts that worked on them, sometimes ruining them, such cities could be called "the city", i.e. an entity, a punctuality, i.e. a body, i.e. a limit, i.e. finally, for us from now on, a legend.

For the first thing we can say about the contemporary city, the city as it lives and unfolds before our eyes, is that it is not like this, that it is no longer an integrally composed unit, that it is no longer a body that feels and perceives its limit. This movement of limitlessness and erasure of edges, which began with the industrial revolution, has since the Second World War accelerated into the form (if it is a form at all - and that is the whole point) of a headlong rush.

By constantly extending its reach and even beyond itself through the roads and accesses that connect it to other cities, the city has come to lose itself, and this is not news to anyone, but as one would lose oneself in a wood that one has planted oneself.

Images available
for the press



Kourtney Roy, *Manhole*, 2017
Baryta colour inkjet print
60 x 90 cm



Louis Stettner, *Promenade 1959*, 1959
Silver gelatin print
29,5 x 44,5 cm

The use of the visuals is exclusively reserved for the promotion of the exhibition and is valid until its closing date.

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© Louis Stettner, courtesy Galerie Esther Woerdehoff

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Simone Kappeler, *Los Angeles, 18.7.1981*, 1981
Ilfochrome color print
80 x 120 cm



Gail Albert Halaban, *Chelsea, Manhattan, Penn South, Anita checking on Lou*, 2008
Pigment print
50,8 x 61 cm

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