

DAMN^o 36

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2013

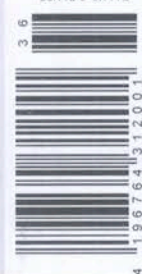
A MAGAZINE ON CONTEMPORARY CULTURE



Thomas Lommée / Rosemarie Trockel / Peter Zumthor / Tom Dixon
PearsonLloyd / Cyprien Gaillard / Alfredo Jaar / Jasper Morrison
Touching Ground: Floor and Wallcoverings

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2013 OFFICE OF DISPOSAL 9000 GENT X P509314

EUR 12 € UK 11 £



Ruinous Joy

Into the darkness with Cyprien Gaillard

Possessing a bleak view of modern life, Cyprien Gaillard pours his every emotion into his work to produce art that is overtly obstinate and imbued with meaning. In his current exhibition in Milan, the full glory of his jab at the fake propensities of our time are on view. The mediums he employs to tell these tales of woe are various, as are the ploys and angles he adopts to do so. An installation presenting disaster evidence, presented as per the display in a natural history museum vies with rubbings of ironically marked manhole covers in Los Angeles, while videos of grim architectural horrors offset arrays of poignant Polaroid photographs strategically arranged

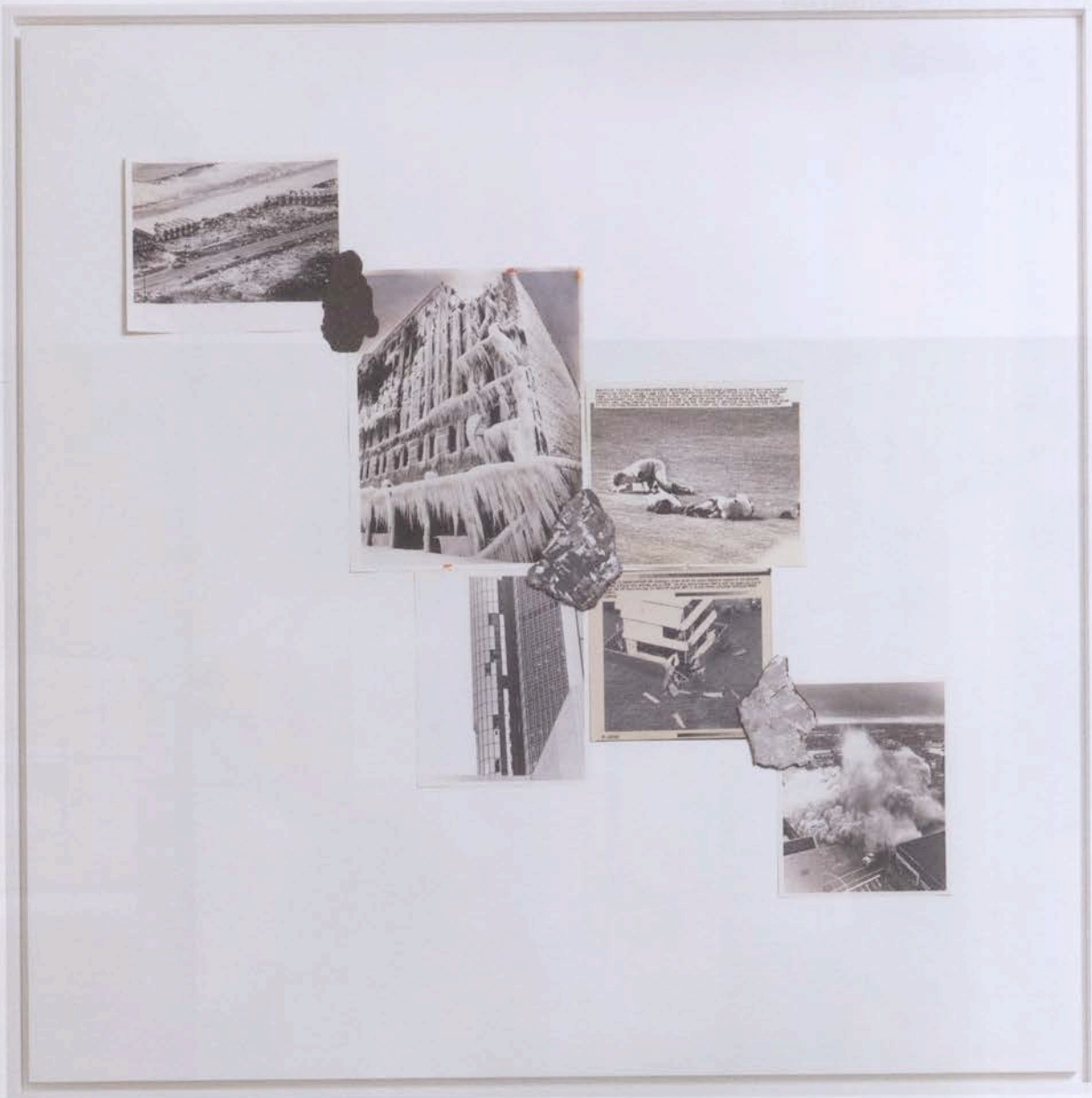
SILVIA ANNA BARRILA

"The future is but the obsolete in reverse." This Vladimir Nabokov quote is one of French artist Cyprien Gaillard's favourites, and it is, in a way, a key to understanding his art. "I think Modernist buildings stand for that", Gaillard once said. "There is something quite mediaeval about these Modernist structures."

Architecture, and in particular the Modernist movement, is a central object of study for Cyprien Gaillard, who has been defined as an "archaeologist of the wreckage of modernity" Gaillard travels the world looking for monuments of our era that have lost their aura and symbolic power, and he documents their decay and destruction following social and cultural transformations in the form of videos, photographs, collages, and sculptures. He goes back and forth between the present and the past, showing continuous cross-references in time. "History can only be found outdoors" Gaillard says, "this is the reason why I spend most of my time outdoors, try-

ing to confront myself as much as I can within the landscape I'm interested in."

The location for Gaillard's first major solo exhibition in Italy (starting November 13), chosen by Nicola Trussardi's art foundation, is a kind of wreckage of modernity in itself: the military bakery of Caserma XXIV Maggio in Milan, a fascinating example of industrial architecture built in the Romanesque-revival style in 1898, which closed in 2005 after having been used for over a century to supply bread to the military complexes in Lombardy, nourishing the entire city of Milan during World War II. For the last few years it has been used to house all the young men in Milan who are called up in the three-day selection for compulsory military service. On the occasion of Cyprien Gaillard's exhibition, the doors of the Caserma will be open to civilians for the first time. "The Caserma is a very interesting place", Gaillard tells DAMN° "It is also challenging, because it is not a white cube. I have always cherished the



MILLIONS INTO DARKNESS, 2012
Showcase, meteorite pieces,
b/w photographs
130 x 130 x 90 cm
© Cyprien Gaillard
Courtesy of Sprüth Magers
Berlin/London

CYPRIEN GAILLARD
Photo: Ronald Dick



PANIFICIO MILITARE / MILITARY
BAKERY
Caserma XXIV Maggio, Milano
Photo: Marco De Scalzi

NOT YET TITLED, 2012

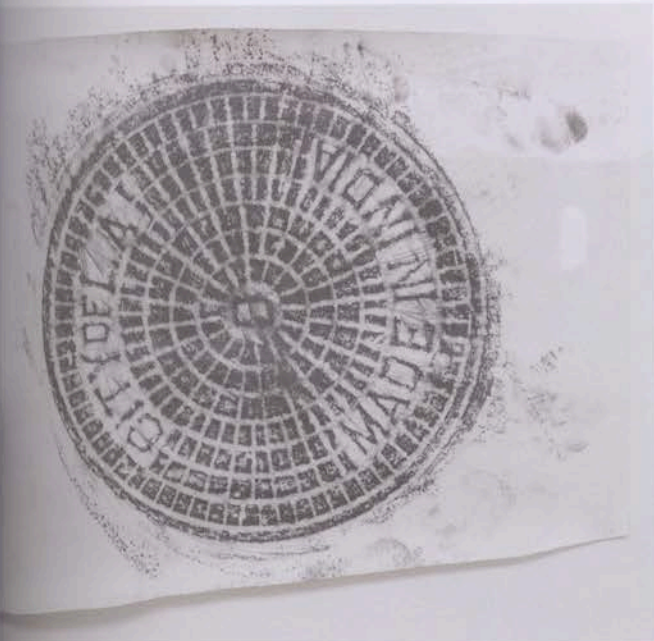
Collage

55 x 75cm (framed)

© Cyprien Gaillard

Courtesy of Sprüth Magers

Berlin/London



dynamic and the dialogue between the outdoors, where the work is made, and what I like to refer to as the 'extreme indoors' the white cube, where my work ends up being shown or displayed – most of the time as relics of the outside world. But here this dialectic is undermined, with the Caserma existing somewhere in the middle."

TEENAGE TENDENCIES

In the exhibition, which is entitled *Rubble and Revelation*, Gaillard presents old and new works. The show refers back to the first films he produced, "kind of milestones in my work" as he defines them. We are talking here about *Real Remnants of Fictive Wars* (2003-2004). Gaillard once described the work in an interview with *Serpentine Director*, Hans Ulrich Obrist: "There is an empty landscape. A cloud of smoke comes, it erases the landscape in front of the camera, and then the landscape is redrawn. Somehow it reappears as a more fragile ruin. This was the first work of mine that started to deal with this idea of ruin and engaging with the landscape, trying to even in a violent way – make a more accurate representation of it. Filming a landscape or taking a picture was not enough, I had to engage with it somehow. This defines a lot of my future work." The clouds look like natural phenomena but they are not. They were generated by fireworks lit in the forest, a teenage practice, or, as Gaillard defines it, "a common act of destruction, of vandalism."

The same teenage type recklessness appears in another video shown in the exhibition: *The Lake Arches* (2007). The artist uses his mobile phone to record two young men diving into an artificial lake. One of them hits the bottom, breaks his nose, and comes out of the water bleeding. Witness to the scene is an imposing wreck, a Postmodernist building by Spanish architect Ricardo Bofill at Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, in the suburbs of Paris; once a symbol of the Postmodernist belief, today it stands like a water-



locked dungeon. Another fallen utopia of a housing project is the protagonist of the work *Pruitt-Igoe Falls*. The video shows the demolition of a building in a Glasgow suburb. Gaillard stated in 2009 that he had witnessed over 30 demolitions in the previous five years. From the dust, an image of Niagara Falls emerges. The result is a kind of painting in motion that recalls 18th century representations of ruins, the Grand Tour, Giovanni Piranesi, and Hubert Robert. The title of the work refers to a residential block built in St. Louis, Missouri in the 1950s that soon after completion became infamous for its poverty,

GATES, 2012

Frottage
88 x 106 cm (unframed)
© Cyprien Gaillard
Courtesy of Sprüth Magers
Berlin/London

PANIFICIO MILITARE / MILITARY BAKERY

Caserma XXIV Maggio, Milano
Photo: Marco De Scalzi



crime, and segregation. It was torn down in 1972, on a date that architectural theorist Charles Jencks defined as the moment in which “Modern Architecture died” (in an irony of fate, the same architect of the project, Minoru Yamasaki, was the designer of the Twin Towers).

PARADOXICALLY MINDED

Buildings losing their function are also the subject of the work, *New Picturesque*. Old black-and-white postcards showing ancient castles are covered with pieces of paper that hide and at the same time reveal what is below. The castles have lost their meaning and been turned into Disneyland-like entertainment areas. Another work on paper, *Geographical Analogies*, consists of hundreds of Polaroid images gathered in groups of nine according to their visual analogies. They associate with pictures taken all around the world. What they have in common is the sense of the sublime, expressed in different ways: from the pyramids in Mexico to the housing projects in the Bronx, from French ruins to new buildings in Egypt.

The show also features new works. Among these are some rubbings produced in Los Angeles this year and exhibited here for the first time. For these works the artist collected imprints of manholes in LA carrying the inscription “City of Los Angeles. Made in India” a little paradox that summarises the cosmopolitan character of the city – it being at once a breeding ground for social tension and for multicultural creativity. Another new work conceived for this exhibition is composed of six display cabinets – like those you would find in a natural history museum, one of Gaillard’s favourite kinds of museum – show-

ing hundreds of pieces of evidence the artist has collected for his own constructed history of conflicts and disasters.

MUSIC MAKES THE WORLD GO ROUND

The soundtrack of the exhibition is an original work composed by the American band Salem, who are well known for mixing different genres and providing dark atmospheres. The work is a remix of the prelude to *Rheingold*, the first of the four operas constituting Richard Wagner’s ‘*Der Ring des Nibelungen*’ Wagner’s cycle is an imposing drama that ends with the fall of the gods; it was written during a time of revolutionary turmoil in Europe that recalls the world of today. This is well explained by Gaillard. “I wonder why there aren’t more artists making art with a darker quality to it? I feel, especially in music, that very little art reflects our times. And these are dark days, are they not? I feel that there is a form of truth in these ruins that I do not find elsewhere, they tell you where you are and when you are, but all these pedestrian shopping streets and these new parks that all mayors are in a hurry to devise for their cities, these fake places of peace, make me sick. I never think of the places I travel to as dark or morbid, I find there is a form of honesty and truth in the ruin that I don’t find in the façades of those new glass buildings.” <

Cyprien Gaillard. Rubble and Revelation
 Caserma XXIV Maggio, Milan
 Until 16 December 2012
 Fondazione Nicola Trussardi
www.fondazione nicola trussardi.com

THE LAKE ARCHES, 2007
 Video, 1'39"
 © Cyprien Gaillard
 Courtesy of Sprüth Magers,
 Berlin/London; Bugada & Cargnel,
 Paris; Laura Bartlett Gallery,
 London



1



2



3



4

REAL REMNANTS OF FICTIVE WARS IV, 2003 (1)
 Video: 7'14"
 © Cyprien Gaillard
 Courtesy of Sprüth Magers, Berlin/London; Bugada & Cargnel, Paris; Laura Bartlett Gallery, London

GEOGRAPHICAL ANALOGIES, 2006-2010 (2)
 Mixed media
 65 x 48 x 10 cm (unframed)
 © Cyprien Gaillard
 Courtesy of Sprüth Magers, Berlin/London; Bugada & Cargnel, Paris; Laura Bartlett Gallery, London

PRUITT IGOE FALLS, 2009 (3)
 DVD, 6'55"
 © Cyprien Gaillard
 Courtesy of Sprüth Magers, Berlin/London; Bugada & Cargnel, Paris; Laura Bartlett Gallery, London

NEW PICTURESQUE, 2012 (4)
 Postcard, paper
 8.9 x 13.9 cm (unframed)
 © Cyprien Gaillard
 Courtesy of Sprüth Magers Berlin/London