



## **GROUPE MOBILE**

**February 13 to July 2, 2016**

**Yaacov Agam, Andrea Ancira (Pernod Ricard Fellow), Ellie Armon Azoulay, Kemi Bassene, Yogesh Barve, Kim Beom, Jean Bhowmagary, Judy Blum Reddy, Constantin Brancusi, Laurent Brégeat, Alexander Calder, Luis Camnitzer, CAMP, Esther Carp, Clark House Initiative, Camille Chenais, Justin Daraniyagala, Jochen Dehn, Cristiana de Marchi, Max Ernst, Mitra Farahani, Joanna Fiduccia, Alberto Giacometti, Alberto Greco, Zarina Hashmi, Iris Haüssler, MF Hussain, Sonia Khurana, J.D. Kirszenbaum, Naresh Kumar, Emmanuelle Lainé, Laura Lamiel, Life After Life, Nalini Malani, V.V. Malvankar, Ernest Mancoba, Julie Martin & Billy Klüver, Tyeb Mehta, Adrián Melis, Marta Minujín, Tsuyoshi Ozawa, Prabhakar Pachpute, Akbar Padamsee, Amol K Patil, Rupali Patil, Pablo Picasso, Edward Quinn, Nikhil Raunak, Man Ray, Krishna Reddy, Edward Ruscha, Suki Seokyeong Kang, Sumesh Sharma, Amrita Sher-Gil, Shunya, Francis Newton Souza, Pisurwo Jitendra Suralkar, Sharmeen Syed, Jiří Trnka, Marc Vaux, Marie Vassilieff, Susan Vogel, Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa et de nombreux autres**

Curators: **Mélanie Bouteloup & Virginie Bobin**

With the complicity of **MNAM CCI – Centre Pompidou**

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## RETRACING THE SOCIAL LIFE OF ARTWORKS THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY

By **Mélanie Bouteloup** and **Virginie Bobin**

A former carpenter who took up photography after being injured in the First World War, **Marc Vaux** began in the 1920s to carry his photographic chamber around the various artist studios of Montparnasse and Paris. By the early 1970s he had produced over 250,000 glass plates. To stand in the reserve holdings of the Centre Pompidou (where the collection has been housed for the past thirty years) and hold in gloved hands a photograph by **Marc Vaux** is to watch as the margins of history and of the work of artists—which the photographer kept out of frame sometimes with a strip of black tape—come to life. It is to pick up the trail of works of art lost during the Second World War. It is to observe all the objects, images, and newspaper cuttings that together paint the landscape of the artist at work, but also to see the movement of the artist's works, piled on top of each other on the floor, leaned up against walls not yet prepped as picture rails, rich in lives juxtaposed in hybrid and transitory assemblages, in the manner of what **Brancusi** called his *groupes mobiles* (mobile groups).

Our exploration of the **Marc Vaux** funds acts as a point of departure for the Villa Vassilieff's inaugural project, where we re-examine, in a dialogue with contemporary artists and associate researchers, the photographs, their production contexts and the historical narratives attached to them. Rather than set our sights on the unattainable ideal of an objective and definitive history, we focus instead on the investigative process involved in the creation of these histories: reading, verifying, unframing, comparing, dating, digging, identifying... Today, as the Centre Pompidou is set to undertake the mammoth task of digitizing the funds, we have a unique opportunity to partake in the precise cataloguing of thousands of glass plates, and examine the process of patrimonialization itself as it is being carried out in as many actions, manipulations and reconditionings as there are new photographic images. What do we preserve? Where do we store the glass plates? How do we name and class them? According to what criteria? How do we put them back into circulation given the fragmentary information we have for so many of them? How do we foster productive fusions with other resources themselves isolated in other reserve holdings? Where do we begin?

At a time when it is necessary to challenge the (intellectual, geographic, economic) modes of accessing knowledge, we might imagine collective and intuitive ways of working that go beyond disciplinary borders, beyond the single academic field, to make way for singular interpretations and to reassert the role of art as a “contact zone” for society.

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The Villa Vassilieff’s inaugural exhibition, entitled *Groupe Mobile*, invites the visitor to a double immersion: into the Marc Vaux funds, and into the renovation process of Villa Vassilieff. We thus chose to initiate a dialogue between many photographs and objects gathered during the year that we spent planning for the Villa Vassilieff. Through the lens of photography, *Groupe Mobile* intends to draw the contours of an institution willing to set in multiple motions again the history of art as a discipline that is still too anchored (especially in France) in Eurocentrism and the weight of Academia. After a discussion with the director of the Ateliers Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris (our neighbor in Montparnasse), during which he shared his desire to move away from the French academic tradition, we chose to gather at Villa Vassilieff a few of the works found in their studios, as an invitation for them to play truant.

The scream expressed in **Kim Beom**’s video underlines — with a certain irony — this will to set free from the weight of a tradition that continues to stand on a largely formal appreciation of the work of art, still perceived as a finished product rather than as the fruit of a process. This is also at stake in **Luis Camnitzer**’s participation in *Groupe Mobile*, him who embraced teaching and pedagogy so that they would never be separated from life. *Write the biography of an idea* thus invites visitors to reflect on the trajectories of ideas and works, and transform their apprehension. This leitmotiv also guided the choice of including **Man Ray**’s film *Étoile de mer*. With the complicity of Kiki from Montparnasse, Man Ray disrupts the conventional codes of perception. Filmed through thick glass, the characters are blurred, and the film calls for a constant exercising of our gaze. *Groupe Mobile* thus encourages companionships that may at first seem unusual or anachronistic, yet that help us rethink our relationship to works and ideas.

Exhibition views, photography of artworks and artists, and the reconstruction from archives permit a wider focus on the artwork to

encompass social, economic and even political data. The incredible epic journey of a Fang sculpture—recounted by **Susan Vogel** in her 8-minute film—offers a brief run through of the transformations undergone by works of art through eras and fashions. We watch the piece, within each environment, evolve according to the various production contexts it is slotted into (or rather lose its personality, as recounted in **Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa**'s intervention). This is exactly what is at stake here: understanding the complexity of circulations and encounters at play in the formation and the life of works, which **Edward Ruscha** wished for in his text *The Information Man*. As a terrain, Montparnasse appears to be a good departing point to study them.

Our first exploration of the **Marc Vaux** funds gave us access to the work of artists such as **Esther Carp**, **Pan Yuliang** or **F.N. Souza**, who emerge as a few of the portraits of this cosmopolitan Paris.<sup>1</sup> The curators of **Clark House Initiative** chose to feature the interactions and relations (including amorous ones) between Indian and international artists from the 1960s up to this day, with, as focal points, Paris and the painter, filmmaker, ceramicist, magician, film producer and indefatigable host **Jean Bhowgary**, who held a position at UNESCO for nearly forty years and whose work now occupies every nook of the apartment where his daughter still lives in Boulogne. The extraordinary work carried out by Clark House Initiative on thinking about the history of art differently, outside of museum institutions, while giving a voice to very young artists, seems to us to be of crucial importance. The constellation of artists and materials they brought together and scattered throughout the exhibition reveals and stimulates new encounters between artists as well as the migration of ideas, through circulations that challenge the concept of national identity in art and a homogenous and Eurocentric notion of modernity.

Looking into the Marc Vaux funds is also tackling (tearing into) the blind spots of art history, the lost works of art, the artists (mostly women) absent from hegemonic or partial narratives (like **Marie Vassilieff**), which too

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<sup>1</sup> The portraits gathered here attest to the crosspollination and cohabitation that in a constant exchange of influences formed the artistic and intellectual life of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They give prominence to women, foreigners, models and other figures often eclipsed from a history of art dominated by a few big (male) names. Portraits of the artist as worker (**Ossip Zadkine**) or as mother wasted by poverty (**Astrid Noack**), the images offset the picturesque vision of a cosmopolitan, festive Paris associated with the parties in Montparnasse.

often relegated them to the roles of friends, muses and hostesses... It is in part thanks to the Marc Vaux funds that **Nathan Diament** was able to track down the work of his great uncle **J.D. Kirszenbaum**, work that was scattered or destroyed as the painter fled the rise of Nazism in Berlin in 1933, and then occupied Paris in 1940. **Kirszenbaum** was associated with the “School of Paris” (less a movement than a “historical event”<sup>2</sup>)—the convergence, particularly around Montparnasse, of a number of artists and intellectuals from diverse geographic and social horizons. Whether passing through or settling there for the long-term—or taking on French nationality, even—these artists developed the language of polyphonic modernity, resolutely transnational and sustained by individual histories and political engagements too often faded out by the linearity of official narratives.

There is always some speculation in archive work. Even in photography, gaps remain, and it is not about wanting to fill them all. The task is grueling, the materials often difficult to access, the information contradictory, and memories fallible or hard to share, as witnessed in the film by **Adrián Melis**, as well as by **Mitra Farahani** about **Bahman Mohassess**. Fiction sometimes enters into play as a way of thinking about research methodologies in art history: take **Iris Häussler**’s mad project on the life of a fictional artist, Sophie La Rosière, or **Tsuyochi Ozawa**’s attempt to imagine **Fujita**’s presence in Indonesia during the Second World War. In short, we wish to provoke official history and chronologies so that we may challenge them and confirm that they are written according to selected points of view one is required to know. To consider their shadows and their bright spots, the play of light, like in the photographs of **Brancusi**, who in his *groupes mobiles* incorporated the moving point of view of the spectator into the creative act. The films shot by Brancusi in his studio influenced Sonia Khurana, who, using her own body as sculpture, imposes a different figure—that of a non-European woman, with generous curves and a burlesque manner, who resolutely appropriates both the artist’s

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<sup>2</sup> Nadine Nieszawer, quoted by Johanna Linsler, in « Jesekiel David Kirszenbaum, entre aspiration révolutionnaire et mémoire du shtetl », in *L’irréparable. Itinéraire d’artistes et d’amateurs d’art juifs réfugiés du “Troisième Reich” en France, 1933-1945*, Koordinierungsstelle Magdeburg, 2013.

work space and traditional representations of art. It's not anymore a matter of making sculpture move, but of bringing one's one self into motion, in an act of emancipation.

To search photographs—especially in their margins—for the social life of artworks and the movement that brings them into being, is also to notice with which tools, gestures and readings it is shaped. It is paying attention to what lies around the studio, what is collected (see photographs by **Edward Quinn** or **David Douglas Duncan** in Picasso's studio), what encounters take place there, and perhaps then to step out for a stroll, like **Picasso** and **Cocteau** did in Montparnasse one sunny afternoon in July 1916, rediscovered by **Billy Klüver** and **Julie Martin** in the early 80s. Photographs taken by **Harry Shunk** of **Marta Minujín's** public destruction of her artworks, contributed to the documenting, circulation and "collection" of performances, reshaping the relationship between works of art and their photographic representation.

There are so many ways of setting artworks back into motion, and *Groupe Mobile* attempts to choreograph these multiple possibilities. Thanks to the Marc Vaux funds, works can be observed in unusual contexts, like **Max Ernst's** sculptures, photographed on Parisian rooftops. The camera has the ability to capture different facets of an artwork, from the front, the sides, from below... Works by **Yaacov Agam** and **Julio Gonzalez** are photographed from various points of view. The movement of the work itself is sometimes grasped by the camera within a single shot: **Calder's** works have thus been paradoxically immortalized in movement by Marc Vaux.

For **Matisse**, photography was a tool to record the different stages of his paintings in progress. Marc Vaux photographed series he exhibited to retrace the elaboration process of his artworks. The funds thus offers alternative approaches to works by artists deemed too well-known. Our exhibition also includes series by **Jean Bhownagy**, who tested different ideas around a same motif on wood or metal plates, generating as many variations or co-presences. This idea of the motif is central to the exhibition. Similar forms reoccur, duplicate and transform following their reproduction on different media (like when **Joanna Fiduccia** retraces successive apparitions and evolutions of a sculpture by **Alberto Giacometti**); or when their author himself reproduces them through various forms, like Jean Bhownagary with scarves, ceramics, engravings or watercolors. Repetition never really repeats itself, but expresses the flow

of creation, constantly nurtured by various influences.

A drawing by **Bahman Mohassess** representing one of his most often recurring motif — a fish — is displayed next to artists he was fond of: **Alexander Calder**, **Constantin Brancusi** and **Henri Matisse**. In the margins, a quote by Andy Warhol, grand master of repetition and proliferation of artworks in the fabric of daily life — “into direct contact with people and things,” as **Alberto Greco** would say, albeit with very different motivations. It is that kind of relations between artists so often separated in the great narrative of modernity’s history that *Groupe Mobile* seeks to bring forward. **Ernest Mancoba**, for instance, is one of these artists whose work transpires from exchanges he would have experienced while traveling around the world.

It was important for us, within the non-linear story that we attempt to unfold in *Groupe Mobile*, to invite artists to contemplate this space, and to inhabit it, in an alliance that is respectful of its history—not to seek to transform it, but to work with it. **Jochen Dehn** is restoring it. **Karthik Pandian** and **Paige K. Johnston** (*Life After Life*) are filling it with animated furniture. **Laura Lamiel** is moving an “instance” of her studio into it and regularly inhabits it. **Suki Seokyeong Kang** is staging an installation that cuts through and reframes the space. **Emmanuelle Lainé** is creating a spatio-temporal trompe-l’œil, a mise en abyme of different modes of photographic staging, with the complicity of **André Morin**. The result of two weeks’ work at the Villa Vassilieff, *Une méthode des lieux* includes both photographs from the Marc Vaux funds and fragments of the ongoing restoration of the Villa Vassilieff, and for the first time, the bodies that worked on it, suspended in a moment of artificial rest that can recall the artists’ poses as portrayed by Vaux. The installation is inviting us to take an active stance and question assigned categories (sculpture and/or photography, inside and/or out) and the boundaries separating work, relationships and representation.

To sustain a critical doubt: must we look at photography and what it represents, or what is outside of it? It is important to approach works of art by multiplying perspectives, and most importantly to move them back into the center of the public sphere, away from the sidelines or the reserve holdings of institutions. Observing the movement of works and artists, stimulating new ones, using different tactics: to endlessly undertake the task of zooming in, zooming out, assembling and juxtaposing; to pay

attention to margins and borders, especially where they warp; to play with different methods of hanging, involve multiple collaborators, where they artists, researchers, neighbors... We thus worked with **Camille Chenais** and **Ellie Armon Azoulay**, two researchers who accompanied our exploration into the Marc Vaux funds. We also invited team members who work on the renovation of Villa Vassilieff to leave traces of their passage through souvenirs of their choice.

Based on these alliances and a few trajectories we crossed during our research, we imagined moving as if on a path through the spaces of the Villa Vassilieff, like a house where one can amble through its rooms, read or chat with a passing guest, while always staying in touch with the outside. The key is for these conversations to spread permanently to programs in institutions, and multiply in various places and in different ways. It is also about building ties with the neighborhood (like with the Ateliers Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris), learning centers, universities and art schools, with a new generation of civic organizations. Nourishing the less exclusive representations and customs of our heritage offers a greater chance for independent, original, and non-reductive initiatives to emerge.

## WHO WAS MARC VAUX?

**By Ellie Armon Azoulay, Virginie Bobin and Didier Schulmann**

The answer to this question varies with every visit to the funds, kept in the Centre Pompidou since the photograph passed away in 1971. At first, it appears as a spectacular, perfectly structured pile of thousands of cardboard boxes manufactured by photographic glass plates producers. Family names — at times misspelled — for more than 6000 artists who were active in Paris between the early 20s and the end of the 60s, whose studios Marc Vaux visited to photograph their works, have been clumsily painted with gouache, in capital letters. A memorial of sorts, a wall of names, for forty years of artistic creation in Paris. The Marc Vaux funds unveils an archival landscape of such polyphony that one can only wonder about its author: what encyclopedic project could produce such an atlas?

Alongside some of the best known names amongst 20<sup>th</sup> century artists, most of the other names, French and otherwise, suggest that the funds contains reproductions of artworks that never quite made it to the walls of museums. These photographs provide the sources for another art history, which encompasses a much wider community of artists than the one accessed through the euro-centered canons of institutions, good taste and the market, which still prevails over commonly shared narratives. But beyond artists portraits, reproductions of artworks, studios or exhibitions photographs, the funds testifies for the artistic and political upheavals that took Paris as a stage, like the displacement of artworks from the Louvre collection in 1939, under the threat of the war. A war resistant, a chronicler of the workers, Marc Vaux also committed to support artists, by creating the *Foyer des Artistes* (1946-70) and, in 1951, the first *Musée du Montparnasse* at 10, rue de l'Arrivée.

Despite of the richness of his funds, Marc Vaux remained a secondary character of art history, whose role transpires through discreet mentions, like in a letter written by Wilfredo Lam, who insists on the importance of Marc Vaux's photographs to apprehend his work and prepare for his exhibitions. However, Marc Vaux's archive show his rigorous attention to documents, preservation and memory, as witnessed by his note "My first photography", on a print from 1913; or a war landscape marked with a spot where he was injured in 1915 as a soldier. Marc Vaux often re-photographed existing images, sometimes taken by others, to conserve

them. He left behind 250 000 glass plates: as many promises, recollections and potential readings where to find necessary counterpoints to institutions' great narratives.

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*Editors' note: After delving into the observation of glass plates from the Marc Vaux funds, we propose to explore the web of circulations taking place around Atelier 17 — founded by Stanley William Hayter in Montparnasse, where many international artists, among whom Krishna Reddy, gravitated — by inviting Sumesh Sharma from Clark House Initiative to intervene in the exhibition spaces. He responded with the project « The Laboratories of Dr Debat », introduced below.*

## **THE LABORATORIES OF DR DEBAT**

**By Sumeshwar Sharma**

Montparnasse debates its historical intellectualism only in city guide books that render a past far forgotten, which can only be afforded by a class that dwells in the prices assigned by auction houses to the exotic art histories they allow. The Laboratoires du Dr. Debat were founded by French pharmacist François Debat, who found himself on a 20 Francs bill or note during the Vichy period, etched onto it by his friend Clement Serveau. Perhaps the bill represented a France that prided itself as an industrial power and an economy of science and thought. This is demonstrated by the fact that a tin of Inseptol — an intestinal antiseptic — was found in Bombay's flea market Chor Bazaar, which surely had arrived in the city to cure its owner in the 1920s. The Chor Bazaar is a market that lies in few of the lanes that comprise the neighborhood of Bhendi Bazaar. It is a historic neighbourhood that housed the city's depleted Jewish population and is now home to various Muslim communities from across India. It has been a refuge for artists through the years of independence and after, also housing 'a school' of Indian Classical Music tradition — the Bhendi Bazaar Gharana.

The Indian painter **Tyeb Mehta** grew up in the Bohri community and its from there that he commuted each day to the North of the city to apprentice as a film editor. **Saadat Hasan Manto** visited its numerous lodges and chronicled his affairs at the neighboring red-light district of Kamathipura. At Chor Bazaar the Indian Art market began to make rumors with the ascent of the Indian economy and the valuations foreign auction houses brought with them for artists who formed the school of Indian Modernism. They were the likes of **MF Hussain, Akbar Padamsee, Tyeb Mehta, SH Raza** and **Francis Newton Souza**, all of whom were members of the Progressive Artists Group. Each one of them had passed through France either on French scholarships aptly called the 'Bourse Tour Eiffel', or in their search of mentors such as **Picasso, Zadkine** and **Giacometti**. Each understood the internationalism that the Indian socialist government shied away from in the era of protectionism, but that in the years before independence had allowed someone to access Dr. Debat's 'Inseptol'. Others, such as **Jean Bhowmagary**, had learned his ropes in cinema during World War II as a correspondent to Reuters. Because he was an Indo-French, his mother being French, he found himself in Paris working as a documentary film-maker at UNESCO. The group of progressive artists would often find themselves at his home, as on mere budgets they needed somewhere to use the laundry and find the warmth of something similar to Bombay. Bombay was the city that they had left journeying up to Marseille through the Suez canal huddled together on ships with pilgrims on their way to Mecca. Both the pilgrims and the artists were on a pilgrimage to lands that offered them certain truths essential to their identity.

Montparnasse housed the studio of William Hayter, who set up a printmaking workshop called **Atelier 17** where the young **Krishna Reddy** met with **Joan Miró** and finally left Zadkine to concentrate on viscosity printmaking. There he invented, together with Miró, multi-colored viscosity prints. Hayter welcomed many artists from India who later fell out of the art system but their prints are reminders of Montparnasse's history with that past. **Nalini Malani** was among the young getting to Paris in 1969 and working with Reddy outside Hayter's studio making prints. Here she encountered a world that had changed and had begun to question the context of the painting, while a similar outburst in activity was seen at the studio of Bhowmagary. He began to cajole the progressive artists to the camera, many of them later became directors of movies he produced as the head of India's National Films Division.

Malani and Bhowmagary filled the void in Indian Art History to experimentations like those of Beuys and the Fluxus group. The debate they began finds resonances in the practices of **Naresh Kumar** and **Yogesh Barve**, both of whom have spent extensive times in Paris. **Nikhil Raunak** reprints the prints that remained unpublished as plates contesting the idea of the found object and its authorship, while proposing a collaboration between decades that define the contemporary. **Amol K Patil & Yogesh Barve** edit and re-edit efforts of Jean Bhowmagary with artists such as the animator **Jiří Trnka** but also infusing theatre from the times of Bombay's Dalit Renaissance period where culture was the last bastion of dissent against the caste. **'Pisurwo' Jitendra Suralkar**, who fashions himself as a confluence of Picasso and Hussain, draws up a Guernica using the motifs of the Sri Lankan modernist **Justin Daraniyagala**, echoing the pain of the thousands of Tamil Refugees who fled the genocide of Killinochi and now find themselves in the Parisian locale of La Chapelle.

It is in this discussion that begins with the aesthetics of world movement of modernism, which is somewhere enshrined in the tin box of Dr. Debat, that the exhibition is choreographed as a debate. A debate eager to unearth a voice much unheard and ignored in a world where the artist is always romantically imagined as a man. **Judy Blum Reddy** and **Nil Yalter** mapped Paris reminding us that behind its Haussmannian avenues lay neighbourhoods of abjection, pain, racism and misogyny. Judy Blum is the chronicler of this exhibition, setting a timeline of the happenings and intersections of paths as a few Indian men sought artist lives in Paris, New York and London. Villa Vassilieff becomes a stage for this performance of a debate.

## ON *FIFI HOWLS FROM HAPPINESS* BY MITRA FARAHANI

By **Morad Montazami**

It all begins with a desire to make sense of a history of art with neither head nor tail, where strange, mutilated creatures bend over backwards to exist. The inventor of these creatures, **Bahman Mohassess**, did not wait for history to grant him a place to give birth and a voice to the most disturbing monsters for man's guilty conscience in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But the risk for us was that the voice would never be heard. Yet in her film, **Mitra Farahani** leads us beyond the wreckage, acting as a navigator and chronicler of a repressed memory—that of modernity in Iran.

Now the master's redemptive passion has found a spokesperson in this student, who appears to be filming haphazardly. But no, she is in fact following the "pre-written" sheet music to the struggle between forces of the present (memory loss, ignorance) and those of the past (knowledge, a prose dialogue with vanished friends). The fragments of a social, political and artistic history can now be reassembled on an editing table arranged with brio by Mitra Farahani. Mohassess and she pass the ball back and forth ingeniously, both well aware the only way out is death.

Mitra Farahani gives a wide berth to the biographical risk that is the "artist documentary," delicately unveiling the affronts of her own subjectivity when faced with the task of "rewriting history." She follows in the wake of Pasolini and Chris Marker: sorting through the incomplete in search of its poetic form, that of the "work of art-to-come." Thus the last masterpiece-to-be of Mohassess is subtly interwoven with the film-to-be of Farahani. And as we know, an image within an image within another image—or a shadow looming over a shadow looming over another shadow—often ends up truncating the line between reality and fiction.

To score a meeting with Bahman Mohassess is not just to confront the myth of the "modern artist" in Iran but also to come face to face with an intellectual leviathan. Using his personal trajectory and his works, Bahman weaves a fabric of time and place like an intercontinental fugue: from ancient to modern Iran, from renascent Europe to Europe at war and beyond, towards unknown lands only a faun musician would dare to venture. Still more symptomatic is his non-negotiable position on a "life in

art.” In other words, the obligation to perpetually embody the image of one’s work, and be one with it—at the risk of going up in smoke if its physical and moral integrity cannot be preserved. The obligation to have one’s own life become a manifestation of art itself in all its truth. This is what makes the singularity of the testament “co-signed” by Bahman Mohassess and Mitra Farahani.

*This text was written in 2013 to accompany the release of the film.*

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## **ARCHIVE (EXTRACT)**

**By Ariella Azoulay**

« Withheld rage, suffocation, nausea, anger, frustration, fright, horror and helplessness, no less than the joy, revenge and hope or passion reported by those infected with archive fever, bear witness to the fact that archive documents are not merely a collection of dead letters as we were trained to believe by the imperial archive. They are not items of a completed past, but rather active elements of a present. They must be properly and carefully handled, not because they belong to a cherished past, but precisely because they are the means by which destruction might continue to be wrought—just as these documents might enable some restitution of that which continues to exist as present, in the present. The habitus that I have briefly described here, motivated by a right to the archive (*droit à l’archive*) and by the claim to practice it, is not the classical habitus of a historian tracing the past, but that of researchers whose interest in the archive echoes that of people who resisted the oppression wrought by imperial archive, and is aroused by relatively novel realms of knowledge, from post-colonialism to gender theory, or by common sense of responsibility such as that exhibited by citizens like Anat Kam who smuggled thousands of documents from the archive through which “targeted killing” of Palestinians co-citizens was pursued.

All of them are motivated by the understanding that that which has been institutionalized as the order of things is not merely infuriating but reversible—and their archival work is one of the keys to this reversibility.

Intervention, imagination, reproduction, and transmission, are the main practices through which researchers and artists today exercise their right to (the) archive, that is, the right to share the archive, themselves or with others, even when it requires assistance to the documents to be leaked or smuggled, the right to make use of the archive in ways that do not take it (merely) as a depository of the past, storing materials that document what is over and done with. Traces of the constituent violence congealed in the archive can either be preserved untouched, preserving the law of the archive, or be reconfigured and re-conceptualized through a new grid, whose consequences affect the way one is governed, as well as the ways one shares the world with others. Curiosity—but also rage, solidarity, resistance, dissatisfaction, doubt and suspicion, arouse citizens’ - including those who were made non-citizens - interest in the archive, in that which is stored inside, in its structure, in the forms of control it produces and is subject to, and in the possible ways for unraveling and re-composing documents outside the reach of its law and authority. »

*Extract from "Archive." Political Concepts: A Critical Lexicon (e-journal, The New School), Vol. 1, Winter, 2011.*

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## **MANIFESTO VIVO-DITO**

**By Alberto Greco**

*Vivo-Dito* art is the adventure of the real, the urgent document, the direct and total contact with things, places, people, creating situations, creating the unexpected. It means showing and encountering the object in its own place. Totally in accord with cinema, reportage, and literature as a living document. Reality without touchups or artistic transformation. Today I am more interested in anyone at all recounting his life on the street or in a streetcar than in any polished, technical account by a writer. That is why I believe in painting without painters and in literature without writers. This explains why, in recent years, the visual arts have consciously found recourse in chance. It was a way of discovering the other side of reason. All our conscious thought, all our reason limits us, and we fall, very easily, into elementary and limited structures. “Always go in the direction

opposite to the one you should. It's the only way to get somewhere." I find that stupendous.

I don't know if I said this before, but we must go out into the street and not see it as a means of transport, as though everything were a commercial object, or a streetcar that takes us from one place to another. Every death or, better said, every corpse—directly or indirectly, of course—has its assassin. Although this is not the time to cast blame on anyone as it would be too puerile, too simple, I believe dealers have greatly contributed to the demise of painting by turning it into a domestic and commercial object. The prints traced by my shoes on the way from my house to the gallery are more important than the canvases on view there. I don't know who said that, but I totally agree.

A work has meaning as long as it is made as a total adventure, without knowing what is going to happen. Once it's finished, it doesn't matter anymore, it has become a corpse. So let it rest in peace. The contemporary artist has lost his sense of eternity. The passivity of the public should also come to an end. The audience, as audience, should end. Everyone knows too much, or at least seems to, about his own life. And what more can we ask of a person if not to tell something to make his listener shudder? Let us hope that the activities of *Vivo-Dito* will turn things inside out so that the audience will do the talking. We must not forget that *Vivo-Dito* is above all the adventure of the real and of the direct contact with things. Art galleries are opaque warehouses that have fallen into decadence next to the butcher shops, bakeries, markets, tailor shops, theaters, subways, morgues, streets, and real warehouses.

*Extract from a version of the Manifesto originally written in 1963 and translated from Spanish by Maguerite Feitlowitz. A first version was written in Italian in Genoa in 1962.*

## ASSOCIATE INSTITUTIONS

### **Centre Pompidou / National Museum of Modern Art — Kandinsky Library THE MARC VAUX FUNDS: PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE SOCIAL LIFE OF ARTWORKS**

Villa Vassilieff is developing a reflection with the Kandinsky Library at the National Museum of Modern Art, Paris to invite researchers and artists to dialogue with the Marc Vaux funds. Marc Vaux, a figure of Montparnasse, produced more than 250 000 glass plates, currently in the collection of the Centre Pompidou. They provide a new perspective on the social life of artworks and artists – famous and unknown – that he photographed between the 1930s and the 1970s. In 2016, the Centre Pompidou undertakes the digitization of the Marc Vaux funds: a mammoth task, with many issues at stake regarding conservation, preservation, but also historiography, museology and classification. How to approach this funds today, in all its rich complexity? How do Marc Vaux's images concern our present?

With Didier Schulmann (Curator at the National Museum of Modern Art and Head of the Kandinsky Library), Catherine Tiraby (Archivist at the photographic collections, Kandinsky Library), Stéphanie Rivoire (Archive curator, Bibliothèque Kandinsky) et Ellie Armon Azoulay (chercheuse associée, Villa Vassilieff).

### **Fondation Nationale des Arts Graphiques et Plastiques: THE SMITH- LESOUËF LIBRARY**

For over forty years the Fondation Nationale des Arts Graphiques et Plastiques has been working alongside and on behalf of artists. At a time when it seems specialization has become paramount, the FNAGP prefers instead to focus on many different aspects of the life of artists, their “form of life” as well as their creative practice. The FNAGP seeks to accompany artists from the conception and production phases of their work to the circulation of their works, in their housing needs, and even during their advanced years.

Such support at every stage of the artist's life is embodied in a diverse and unique array of means (providing studios, production grants, patronage, dissemination at the Maison d'Art Bernard Anthonioz...and help in settling into a retirement home, the Maison Nationale des Artistes where Marie

Vassilieff spent her last years). This life perspective gives the foundation a better understanding of needs and sensitive issues, and ultimately lends a very particular coherence to its actions across the current field of visual arts.

The FNAGP encourages experimentation, innovation, research, long-term work and projects that entail risk or considerable time. By offering support from the very start to the satellite program of the Jeu de Paume, and by creating, in late 2011, a project funding scheme with a €500,000 annual endowment, these are the lines the foundation has chosen to highlight and will continue to encourage.

It is in this spirit that today the FNAGP is partnering with the research program at the Villa Vassilieff. This experimental project picks up the work begun several years ago at the Maison d'Art Bernard Anthonioz, where creators such as Jessica Warboys, Tamar Guimarães, Frédéric Teschner, and Harmen Liemburg brought their singular perspective on the archives of the foundation. The archives—consisting namely of the Smith-Champion funds and of archives of artists who passed away at the Maison Nationale des Artistes (archives kept at the Smith-Lesouëf Library in Nogent-sur-Marne)—will be the subject of the research of the four artists selected as part of the project supported by the FNAGP: **Iris Haussler, Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa, Emmanuelle Lainé and Lyno Vuth.**

### **Kadist Art Foundation, Paris** **QALQALQAH**

In 2015, Bétonsalon – Centre for Art and Research, and the Kadist Art Foundation Paris, launched the joint publication *Qalqalah*, a “reader” gathering contributions from artists and researchers on a variety of interlinked issues. Conceived as an online, bilingual (French/English) publication, *Qalqalah* provides an outlet for international voices that are not always heard in France, and vice versa. Rather than follow a purely event-based logic, *Qalqalah* develops over time to form a space for interactions, overlaps, digressions and interpretations, for the deepening of lines of research, the sharing of resources, and the development of critical thought decentered from Western points of reference. *Qalqalah* is supported by the UDPN program - Usages des patrimoines numérisés (Idex SPC).

## THE VILLA VASSILIEFF

**Villa Vassilieff, a new cultural establishment owned by the City of Paris, will open its doors in February 2016 in the heart of Montparnasse. It is located on Avenue du Maine in the 15th arrondissement of Paris, on the site of Marie Vassilieff's former studio, property of the SEMAEST, which until 2013 housed the Musée du Montparnasse.** It is run by Bétonsalon — Center for Art and Research, which is thus opening its second site of activities. Villa Vassilieff is conceived as a place for working and living, where to stimulate the blossoming of ideas, encounters and the sharing of knowledge. Through a lively program of residency, exhibitions, events and workshops, Villa Vassilieff invites the audience to get involved in the working process of artists and researchers, bridging heritage and contemporary creation.

Villa Vassilieff has witnessed over a century of history and represents an outstanding cultural heritage. Russian artist **Marie Vassilieff** opened her studio at 21 avenue du Maine, before turning it into an academy in 1911, and subsequently a canteen for artists during the First World War. Throughout its history, it was a place characterized by encounters and experimentation, a hub for artistic debate, which contributed to gather many artists and intellectuals from different social and geographical backgrounds.

Today, Villa Vassilieff intends to reconnect with this history by inviting artists and researchers to look at past and present resources of Montparnasse from a contemporary perspective (**city libraries, Ateliers Beaux-Arts de la Ville de Paris, Bourdelle museum, Zadkine museum...**) but also of associate institutions such as the **Centre Pompidou, the Fondation Nationale des Arts Graphiques et Plastiques or the Picasso museum**. Imagining original forms of encounters with the audience, the Villa strives to shake up art's place in society in particular by questioning the role and use of heritage. The program aims to overcome linear chronologies and the outdated separation between fields of study in order to reshape the place of research, creation and teaching in art.

The Villa Vassilieff will encourage multiple interpretations, digressions and deviations. There, art will be an area of investigation where the tools of understanding and alternative cartographies of our contemporary society

are to be put together. The **Pernod Ricard Fellowship**, a grant aimed at supporting four international artists, curators and researchers in residence every year for a period of three months, will offer various options for conducting new investigations and collecting multiple narratives of our globalized world.

*The project of Villa Vassilieff was made possible thanks to the support of both public and private partners, notably Ville de Paris, région Île-de-France and Fondation Nationale des Arts Graphiques et Plastiques. Pernod Ricard is Villa Vassilieff's leading sponsor.*

## **BÉTONSALON — CENTER FOR ART AND RESEARCH**

Bétonsalon – Center for Art and Research has been designed as a space in which to reflect on and in society, and is working towards the confluence of art and research in order to question the standardised forms of the creation, classification and distribution of knowledge. The Center for Art and Research is located in the 13th arrondissement, on the ground floor of the Université Paris 7; Villa Vassilieff, located in the 15th arrondissement, is the second location for its activities.

The activities of Bétonsalon develop in a process-based, collaborative and discursive manner, following different time spans, in cooperation with various local, national and international organizations, and present themselves under different forms. Exhibitions are enriched by different associated events (workshops, conferences, performances, round table discussions...). Seminars and workshops are organized in collaboration with teachers from the University Paris 7. Off-site research projects are led in partnership with other institutions and residency programs are offered for researchers, artists and curators.

Bétonsalon - Center for art and research is supported by the City of Paris, the Department of Paris, the Paris Diderot University, the Île-de-France Regional Board of Cultural Affairs - Ministry of Culture and communication, Île-de-France Regional Council and Leroy Merlin (Ivry).

Bétonsalon - Centre for art and research is a member of tram, réseau art contemporain Paris/Île-de-France, and of d.c.a / the French association for the development of centres d'art

## **NOW IN BÉTONSALON**

In parallel with the opening of Villa Vassilieff, Bétonsalon – Center for Art and Research is developing an outdoor program within the Université Paris 7, entitled *l'Académie Vivante* (the Living Academy). It is designed as a new laboratory of experimental research implemented during three years in the Epigenetic and Cell Fate unit (CNRS/Paris Diderot). The *Académie Vivante* invites every semester an artist to run the laboratory organized around one research theme. Supported by a team put together every semester, artists profit from privileged access to laboratories and conduct an educational experimental program designed for researchers, students and the large public. The *Académie Vivante* opens its first semester (January-June 2016) under the direction of artists Melissa Dubbin and Aaron S. Davidson.

## **PERNOD RICARD FELLOWSHIP**

**Pernod Ricard has joined forces with the Villa Vassilieff to create the Pernod Ricard Fellowship: a grant aimed at supporting four international artists, curators and researchers in residence every year.** The Pernod Ricard Fellowship is conceived as a platform for artistic research dedicated to the experimentation of both non-linear models of creation and knowledge distribution between researchers, contemporary artists, cultural institutions, non-profit organizations and the general public.

Selected by an international committee consisting of ten members, the four Pernod Ricard Fellows will be invited to spend three months in residency within a refurbished historical studio at the Villa Vassilieff. It is a unique opportunity for these artists and researchers to enhance their vision and to focus on their own work or any other projects. Reflecting the cosmopolitan identity and convivial atmosphere of the former studio of Marie Vassilieff, the Fellows will enjoy bespoke support from researchers and art professionals, along with access to a rich network of institutions in France and abroad, such as the Centre Pompidou (a longstanding partner of Pernod Ricard and Bétonsalon – Center for Art and Research) and the Fondation d'entreprise Ricard, a partner in the project. The Pernod Ricard Fellows will also benefit from numerous research programmes focusing on unexplored resources, developed by Villa Vassilieff in collaboration with museums, public and private archives, as well as universities and art schools.

Lastly, the Fellows will enjoy a dynamic events programme at Villa Vassilieff, offering various options for conducting new investigations and collecting multiple narratives of our globalized world.

### **Pernod Ricard Fellows 2016**

**Andrea Ancira** (curator and researcher, Mexico DF, Mexico)

**Zheng Bo** (artist, Hong Kong/Beijing, China)

**Sojung Jun** (artist, Seoul, South Korea)

**Ernesto Oroza** (artist, Miami, USA/Havana, Cuba)

## FONDATION D'ENTREPRISE RICARD

The Fondation d'entreprise Ricard is carrying on the art sponsorship work the Ricard company has been engaged in for almost twenty years, and has been a springboard for a whole generation of artists. The foundation exists to back today's French art and increase its visibility nationally and internationally. Situated in the heart of Paris, the Fondation d'entreprise Ricard is a venue for exhibitions, creativity and encounters in the context of art in its most contemporary forms.

Every year the foundation engages curators for six exhibitions by young artists. As a place for the exchange and diffusion of ideas, the foundation also hosts symposia on subjects including contemporary art, sociology, literature and philosophy, as well as performances. In addition it provides backing for artist's books and collective publications devoted to the contemporary scene.

An annual highlight is the Fondation d'entreprise Ricard Prize, awarded by a jury of collectors to an artist embodying the spirit of his or her generation. The prize initially took the form of the purchase of a work which was then donated to the Centre Pompidou, where it featured in the permanent collection. In 2014 the Foundation decided to go one step further and offer the prize winner the chance to work on a personal project – video, performance, installation, etc. – abroad.

With this approach, a pointer to the Foundation's close ties to the young French art scene and its firm belief that French art deserves even greater international visibility, the Fondation d'entreprise Ricard has committed to support the Villa Vassilieff and the Pernod Ricard Fellowship, by closely accompanying this project from its very start.



<http://www.fondation-entreprise-ricard.com/>

## COLOPHON

**Editors:** Mélanie Bouteloup & Virginie Bobin

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**Pierre Vialle**, adjunct director, administrator

**Cyril Verde**, technician, production and education manager

### Villa Vassilieff

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**Simon Rannou**, administrative officer

**Daphné Praud**, coordination assistant

**Camille Chenais**, research assistant

**Ellie Armon Azoulay**, research assistant

**Thomas Bataille**, technical assistant

**Denis Berger**, technical assistant

**Paul Pédebidau**, technical assistant

### Bétonsalon – Center for art and research

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**Coordination assistant:** *hiring*

**Julie Esmaeeli Pour**, education assistant

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– Ministry of Culture and Communication

## ARTISTIC COMMITTEE FOR THE PERNOD RICARD FELLOWSHIP AT VILLA VASSILIEFF

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## THANKS

The project of Villa Vassilieff, run by Bétonsalon — Center for Art and Research, was made possible thanks to the support of both public and private partners, notably Ville de Paris, région Ile-de-France and Fondation Nationale des Arts Graphiques et Plastiques. Pernod Ricard is Villa Vassilieff's leading sponsor.

All the artists and associated researchers, as well as lenders for the exhibition, among who the Agence photographique de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, the Ateliers des Beaux Arts de la Ville de Paris (Patrick André & Antoine Pétel), Claude Bernes, Janine Bharucha, Nathan Diament, the Estate of Ernest Mancoba, the Centre National des Arts Plastiques, the Centre Pompidou – MNAM CCI, the Fondation Nationale des Arts-Graphiques et Plastiques, Mikael Andersen Gallery, Adrien Goubet, Philippe Grimminger (Julio González Estate), Les Héritiers Matisse, the Institut National de l'Audiovisuel (Joelle Olivier), Line Kjaer & Tina Maria Nielsen, Raymond Laboute, Philippine Lemaire, Marcelle Alix, Mara Minujín Studio, Anne Mathieu, Misa Shin Gallery, Musée national Picasso Paris, Nadine Nieszawer, Parra & Romerri Gallery (& Alexander Gray Associates), Picasso Administration (Christine Pinault), Lili Reynaud Dewar, Société des Auteurs dans les Arts Graphiques et Plastiques...), Urban Distribution ;

Fondation d'Entreprise Ricard (Colette Barbier, Antonia Scintilla) ;

As well as Emilie Bouvard, Jean Digne, Aurélie Dorard, Ursula & Wolfgang Frei, Jonathan Lense, Louis Matton, Morad Montazami, André Morin, Marlène Schaar, Catherine Sciot, Ouidade Soussi-Chiadmi...

And also the artistic team that renovated entirely the Villa Vassilieff: Jochen Denn, Cyril Dietrich, Angelo Aversa, Julien Crépieux, Frédéric Danos, Tom Danos, Lorraine Féline, Josquin Gouilly Frossard, Romain Hamard, Basil Ivansky, Guillaume Landron, Nicolas Muller and Capucine Vever.

## RENDEZ-VOUS

**Saturday 13 & Sunday 14 February** from 2 to 8 pm

**Opening in the presence of artists, researchers and partners**

Visits of the exhibition will be offered by the Villa Vassiliev team as well as by associate artists and researchers.

During the inaugural opening, other spaces of Allée Marie Vassiliev / Chemin du Montparnasse will open their doors, as well as other spaces from the neighborhood.

**Espace Kracjberg** > Saturday, 5pm: First screening of the cycle *L'Amazonie filmée par les Indiens*, documentary film shot in the frame of the Video nas Aldeias project. / Sunday, 3pm: Book presentation *Les gardiens de l'Amazonie* by Joao Luis Bulcao, followed by Açai testing.

**Immanence** > Saturday and Sunday from 2 to 7pm: Launch of artist Mathieu Zurcher's residency

**Mémoires Magnétiques** > Saturday and Sunday from 2 to 8pm: Screening of films by and about Roger Pic

And in the neighborhood: **Tonus**, 4 rue de la Procession, 75015 > Saturday and Sunday from 2 to 8pm: Jacent Varoym, open studio

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**Tuesday February 16**, 7 to 8.30 pm

**Rediscovering the Marc Vaux funds:** conversation with **Didier Schulmann** (Curator, National Museum of Modern Art, Kandinsky Library), **Nathan Diament** (great nephew of J.D. Kirszenbaum), **Joanna Fiduccia** (art historian) and **Julie Martin** (co-author with Billy Klüver of the book *Kiki et Montparnasse 1900-1930*).

**Saturday February 20**, from 4 to 8 pm

**Carte Blanche to Clark House Initiative** (curatorial collective based in Bombay). Clark House Initiative intervened in the *Groupe Mobile* exhibition to retrace the trajectories of many Indian artists who stayed and worked in Paris in the 50s. During an afternoon of encounters, projections and performances, the curators invite Indian artists from different generations to share these cosmopolitan experiences with the audience.

