

christophe demaître
SELECTED WORKS 2005 - 2007



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SELECTED WORKS 2005 - 2007

EDITING BY WAREHOUSE STUDIO FOR ISLAND6 ARTS CENTER

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ENGLISH INTRODUCTION BY ALEXANDRA VERHAEST

FRENCH INTRODUCTION BY OLIVIA GURDJIAN

WEB WWW.ISLAND6.ORG / WWW.WAREHOUSESTUDIO.ORG



... it seemed that the best word to designate (temporarily) the attraction certain photographs exerted upon me was advenience or even adventure.

Camera Lucida by Roland Barthes

—
I
N THE FEW YEARS OF STUDYING PHOTOGRAPHY, I HAVE DEVELOPED A SPECIAL WEAKNESS FOR NINETEENTH CENTURY IMAGES. THOSE FIRST PHOTOGRAPHS EVER TAKEN, STILL HOLD THE ALCHEMY THAT PHOTOGRAPHY ONCE WAS. I WONDER HOW IT MUST HAVE FELT TO BE THE FIRST TO EXPERIENCE THAT MAGICAL CHEMICAL PROCESS. A GHOST OF THE IMAGE APPEARING ON THE PAPER IN THE DEVELOPMENT BATH, AS IF IT WERE COVERED IN FOG WHICH SLOWLY DISSOLVES UNTIL THE PICTURE REACHES ITS FULL DENSITY. PERHAPS NICEPHORE NIEPCE THOUGHT, AS ROLAND BARTHES ARGUES IN *CAMERA LUCIDA*, THAT IT WAS AN INSTANT PAINTING. IT HAD THE SAME FRAMING, THE SAME PERSPECTIVE AS A PAINTED IMAGE, WITH ONLY THE BRUSHSTROKES MISSING. MY PERSONAL MAGICAL MOMENT OF DEVELOPING A PICTURE FOR THE FIRST TIME HAS SINCE LONG PASSED. BUT PERHAPS THAT PARTICULAR MOMENT IS WHAT DRIVES US PHOTOGRAPHERS. WHENEVER I GO 'HUNTING' FOR THAT ONE SHOT, IT IS THE LONGING FOR THAT MAGIC, NOT THE RATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS THAT PUSHES THE BUTTON. FAILING TO FIND THAT ULTIMATE IMAGE WHICH EXPRESSES IT ALL IS THE TWO-FOLD BLESSING THAT KEEPS US PASSIONATE.

AS CONTEMPORARY URBAN CITIZENS, WE ARE DAILY CONFRONTED WITH THE MILLIONS OF VISUAL STIMULI. FEW IMAGES FORCE US TO REALLY LOOK, MOST OF THEM ARE EVEN HARDLY NOTICED.

BEING BORN IN THE DIGITAL AGE, MY MIND IS SPOILED (MAYBE IN BOTH MEANINGS) WITH IMAGERY. I CAN ONLY DREAM OF ERASING THAT INNER IMAGE BANK, CLEARING IT OF CONTEMPORARY REFERENCES. THE INNOCENCE OF WONDERING HAS DISAPPEARED. THE MOMENT IS LOST IN A STREAM OF MEANINGLESS PICTURES. AS HARD AS THE ADVERTISING MARKET TRIES TO DRAW OUR ATTENTION, THE MORE I TEND TO OVERLOOK THOSE BILLBOARDS. CHOCKING IMAGES, LIKE THE UNIVERSALLY LOVED OR HATED BENETTON ADVERTISING, DON'T STICK ANYMORE. THEY ARE BASED ON A TWO SECOND-SNAP EFFECT OF GETTING THE CLUE AND REMEMBERING THE BRAND. THE ONLY EFFECT THEY HAD ON ME, OVER ALL THESE YEARS, IS A DIMINISHING ATTENTION SPAN AND A BUILT-IN FILTER AGAINST EASILY GAINED CONTENT.

HOWEVER SELDOM, SOME CONTEMPORARY IMAGES ARE STILL ABLE TO FREEZE MY PACE. THEY HAVE THE SAME SILENT QUALITY I FIND IN SOME OLD PHOTOGRAPHS. A KIND OF TIMELESSNESS, AN ALCHEMIC EXCELLENCE, TRANSFORMING METAL INTO GOLD, MOMENTS INTO JOURNEYS.

I SEE CHRISTOPHE'S WORK AS A 'PEREGRINATIO PRO ALCHEMIA', THE QUEST FOR THE MERCURY, A SEARCH FOR THE LOST MAGICAL MOMENT. HIS PICTURES OF CONTEMPORARY CITIES, USING THE SAME EMULSIONS APPLIED BY THOSE FIRST PHOTOGRAPHERS, TRAVEL BETWEEN ERAS, ONE OF ALCHEMY, OBSCURITY AND DARKNESS AND ANOTHER ONE OF FAST MOVEMENT, BRIGHT CITY LIGHTS AND TECHNOLOGY. HE CAPTURES THE SPEED OF THE METROPOLIS. SHOWING INSTANTS OF URBAN LIFE ENVIRONMENTS AND TRANSFORMING THEM CHEMICALLY INTO TRAVELED STORIES. 'RAILWAY-BRUSSELS' MOVES ME IN A VERY PERSONAL WAY. THE PICTURE SEEMS GRATED ONTO THE CANVAS, LIKE ONGOING BELGIAN RAINY DAYS, SAD AND BEAUTIFUL IN THEIR MELANCHOLY. I CAN IMAGINE CHRISTOPHE TAKING THIS PICTURE.

WANDERING AROUND THE BRUSSELS NORTH STATION, LIGHTING A CIGARETTE UNDER HIS COAT AND THEN LIGHTING IT AGAIN WHEN SOME RAINDROP SOAKED THE ASHES WHILE HE WAS LOOKING UP TO THE SKY. AND THEN, IN THE MIDST OF ALL THIS, DISCOVERING THE DANCING HIGH VOLTAGE CABLES AS THE VEINS OF THAT ETERNAL GREY SKY.

HIS PAINTINGS MOVE ME IN A SIMILAR WAY. BODIES ARE SHIFTING LIKE SHADOWS THROUGH THE CANVAS. THEY LEAVE MARKS THAT ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT UNTOLD STORIES. HE TOLD ME THEY ARE MADE IN INSTANTS, LIKE SNAPSHOTS OF EMOTIONAL OUTBURSTS. AS SPONTANEOUS HIS PAINTINGS ARE MADE, AS CAREFULLY HE COMPOSED HIS SCULPTURES.

JOINING UNUSUAL 'OBJET TROUVÉS' INTO NEW COMPOSITIONS, HE SEEKS TO TRULY UNVEIL HIS PERSONAL DESIRES. LIKE THE WISHES OF A LITTLE BOY PLAYING IN THE ATTIC AND INVENTING HIS OWN SCIENCE. PLAYFULLY BUT CAREFULLY, HE COMBINES DIFFERENT MATERIALS INTO HIS OWN GALAXY.

IN HIS WORK, CHRISTOPHE REVEALS HIMSELF AS AN ALCHEMIST OF MODERN TIMES, DISCOVERING HIS OWN ELIXIR; THAT OF CREATING A STOPOVER IN THIS EVER MOVING SOCIETY.

ALEXANDRA VERHAEST
SHANGHAI, 2007/02/02

—

L'homme photosensible...

ET SI CHRISTOPHE DEMAÎTRE ÉTAIT LA PREMIÈRE SURFACE HUMAINE PHOTOSENSIBLE ? CELUI QUI A CAPTURÉ, AU COURS DE SES PÉRÉGRINATIONS ET DE SES OBSERVATIONS UNE INFINITÉ DE LUMIÈRES DIFFÉRENTES, D'OMBRES, DE FORMES, DE CONTRASTES POUR FINALEMENT LES PROJETER SUR UNE MULTITUDE DE SURFACES VARIÉES ET ATYPIQUES. CHRISTOPHE DEMAÎTRE EST LE CAPTEUR HUMAIN DE LUMIÈRE, CRISTALLINE OU OPAQUE, FLOUE OU NETTE, BRUMEUSE OU AVEUGLANTE... LUMIÈRE QU'IL A RÉUSSI À DOMPTER, CONTRÔLER MAIS AUSSI SÉDUIRE ET AMADOUER POUR LA SUBLIMER ET EN FAIRE LE PREMIER RÔLE DE SES COMPOSITIONS.

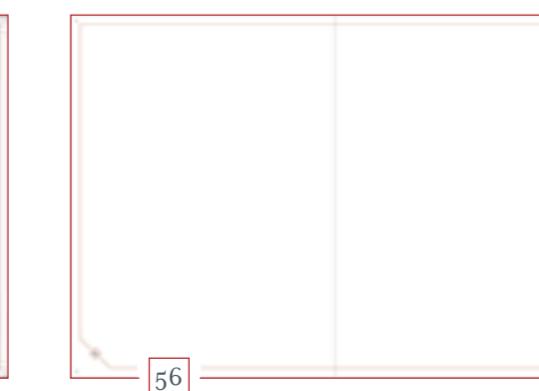
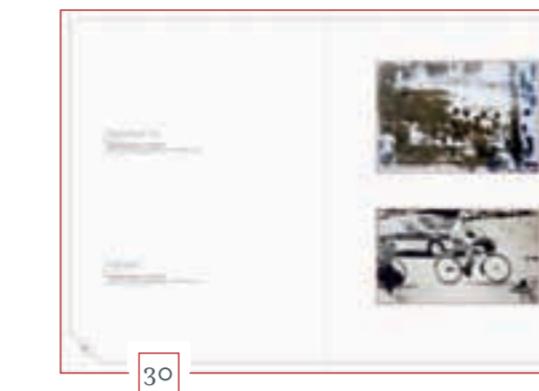
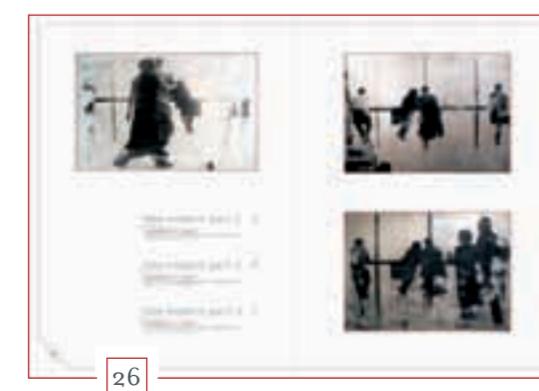
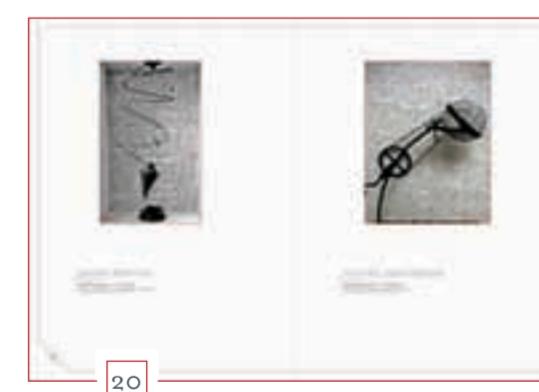
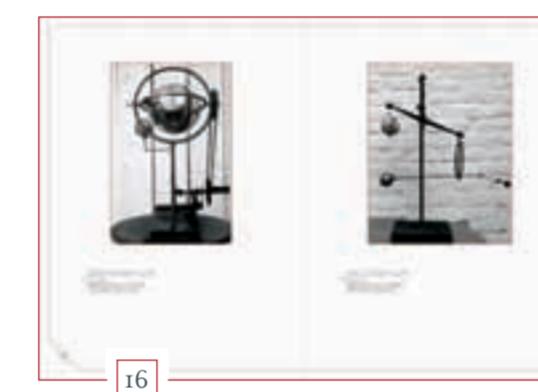
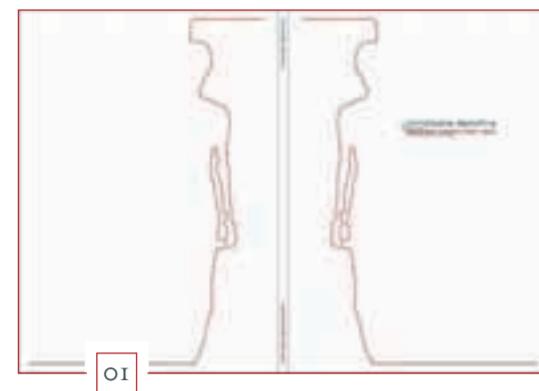
MAIS LA LUMIÈRE EST, PARADOXALEMENT, AUSSI, CHEZ CHRISTOPHE DEMAÎTRE, CELLE QUI CACHE, QUI MYSTIFIE ET RECOUVRE SES SUJETS D'UN VOILE DE PUDEUR... IL N'Y A AUCUN VISAGE, PEU DE REPÈRE, SEULEMENT DES SILHOUETTES, DES CORPS: SOUVENIRS, REGRETS AMERS, AMOURS LAISSÉS EN FRICHE, FANTASMES... LES PHOTOS DE CHRISTOPHE DEMAÎTRE SONT COMME LES INDICES D'UNE HISTOIRE QU'IL FAUT RECONSTITUER, OU QU'IL FAUT PEUT ÊTRE COMMENCER...

CHRISTOPHE DEMAÎTRE NOUS RENVOIE L'IMAGE D'UN ART QUI VOYAGE, QUI FLOTTE ET QUI RÊVE, UN ART QUI JOUE AVEC LES CONTRASTES ET AVEC LES GENS. IL DONNE UN CARACTÈRE ÉPHÉMÈRE À SES OEUVRES ET FAIT DE SES MODÈLES LES PASSAGERS D'UN SONGE, VENUS SIMPLEMENT POUR NOUS TOUCHER... IL Y A, DÉFINITIVEMENT, DU FANTASME DANS SES COMPOSITIONS, FANTASME QU'IL VEUT FIXER DANS LE TEMPS EN LE TIRANT SUR DES MATIÈRES BRUTES ET INTEMPORELLES.

IL RESTE DANS LES OEUVRES DE CHRISTOPHE DEMAÎTRE, UN SOUPÇON DE SPLEEN, UNE DOUCE MÉLANCOLIE, UNE TRISTESSE PRESQUE COMPLAISANTE. ON RESTE HÉSITANT SUR CE VAGUE À L'ÂME, VIENT-IL DU PHOTOGRAPHE OU DE SON SUJET ? SANS AVOIR DE RÉPONSE, ON SE LAISSE DOUCEMENT HAPPER PAR CE SENTIMENT, ON DEVINE DES SÉPARATIONS, DES ADIEUX, DES RETROUVAILLES ÉCHOUÉES, DES AMOURS IMPOSSIBLES OU TROP PASSIONNÉS, DES DESTINÉES AVORTÉES, MAIS AUSSI UNE MULTITUDE DE SENTIMENTS INEFFABLES QUE TOUS SES SUJETS SE PLAISENT À TAIRE...

ON M'A DEMANDÉ D'ÉCRIRE UNE PRÉFACE POUR LE CATALOGUE DE CHRISTOPHE ET AU-DELÀ DE MA PASSION POUR L'ÉCRITURE, LA TÂCHE ÉTAIT COMPLEXE. C'EST EN EFFET TOUJOURS UN PEU DÉLICAT DE METTRE SES MOTS SUR LES OEUVRES D'UN ARTISTE, ON A LE SENTIMENT DE RÉDUIRE, LIMITER, ET PARFOIS DE TROP EXPLIQUER SA DÉMARCHE ET SON PROPOS. ET, SANS VOULOIR FAIRE D'ÉLOGES GRATUITES ET SANS INTÉRÊT, L'UNIVERS DE CHRISTOPHE EST UN MONDE DANS LEQUEL ON PÉNÈTRE AVEC PLAISIR ET FLUIDITÉ. UN UNIVERS À LA FOIS URBAIN ET AÉRIEN, NOURRI PAR LES PASSAGES ÉCLAIRS DE SES SUJETS ET LES MATIÈRES BRUTES DE SES SUPPORTS; LE TOUT MÉLANGÉ DANS UNE ALCHIMIE ÉVIDENTE ET SUBTILE.

OLIVIA GURDJIAN
SHANGHAI, 2007/02/02

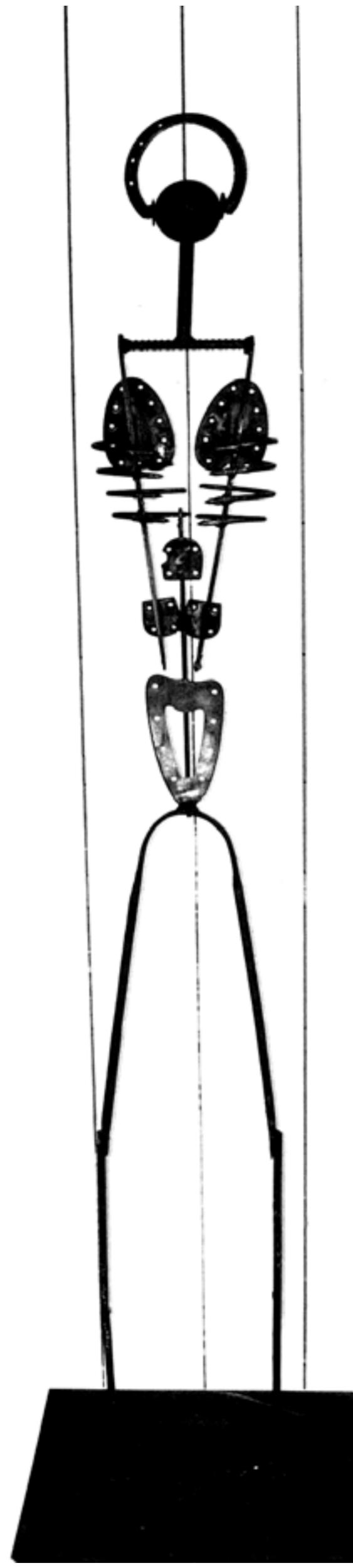


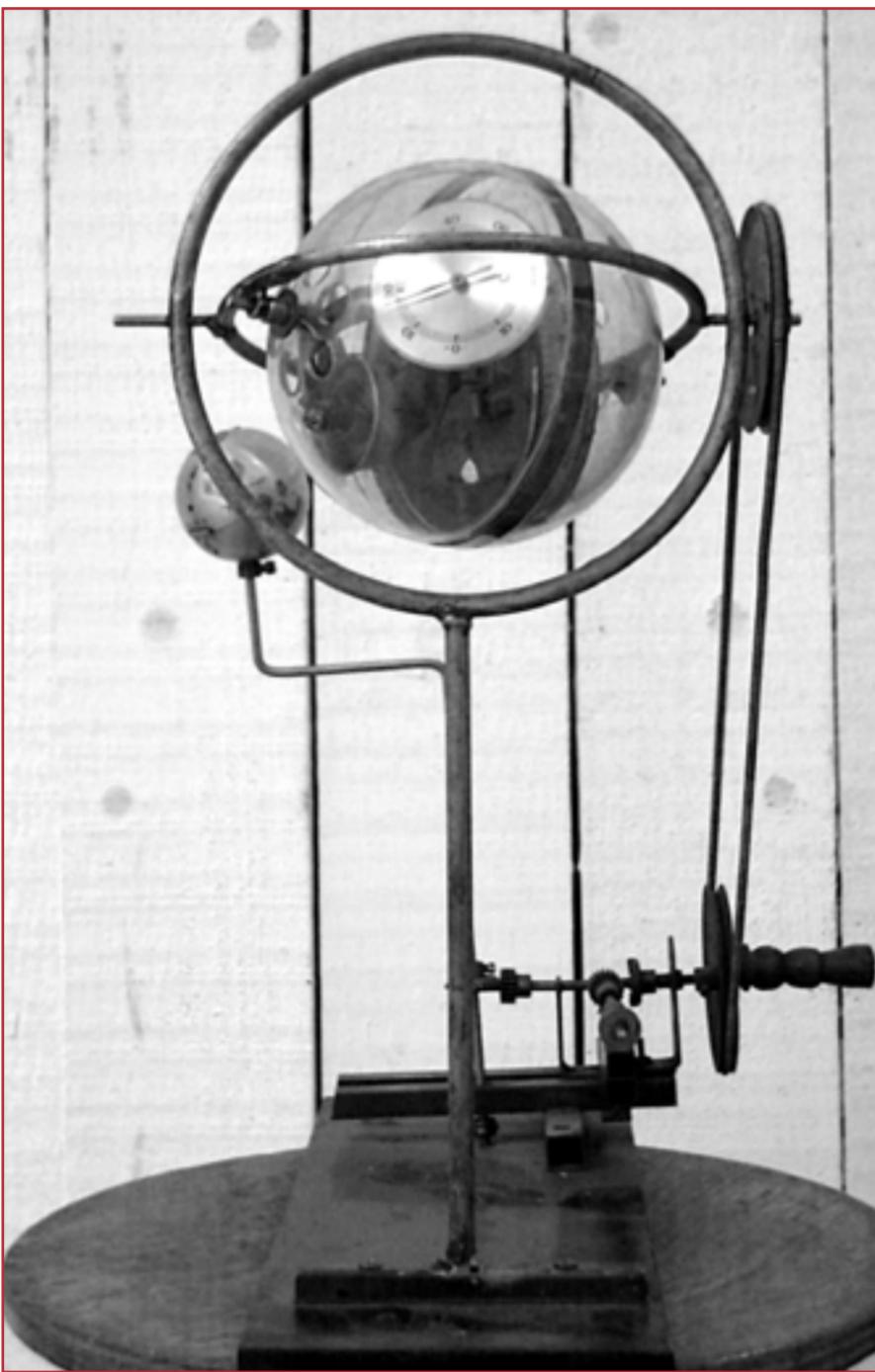
index

sculpture

l'homme de fer

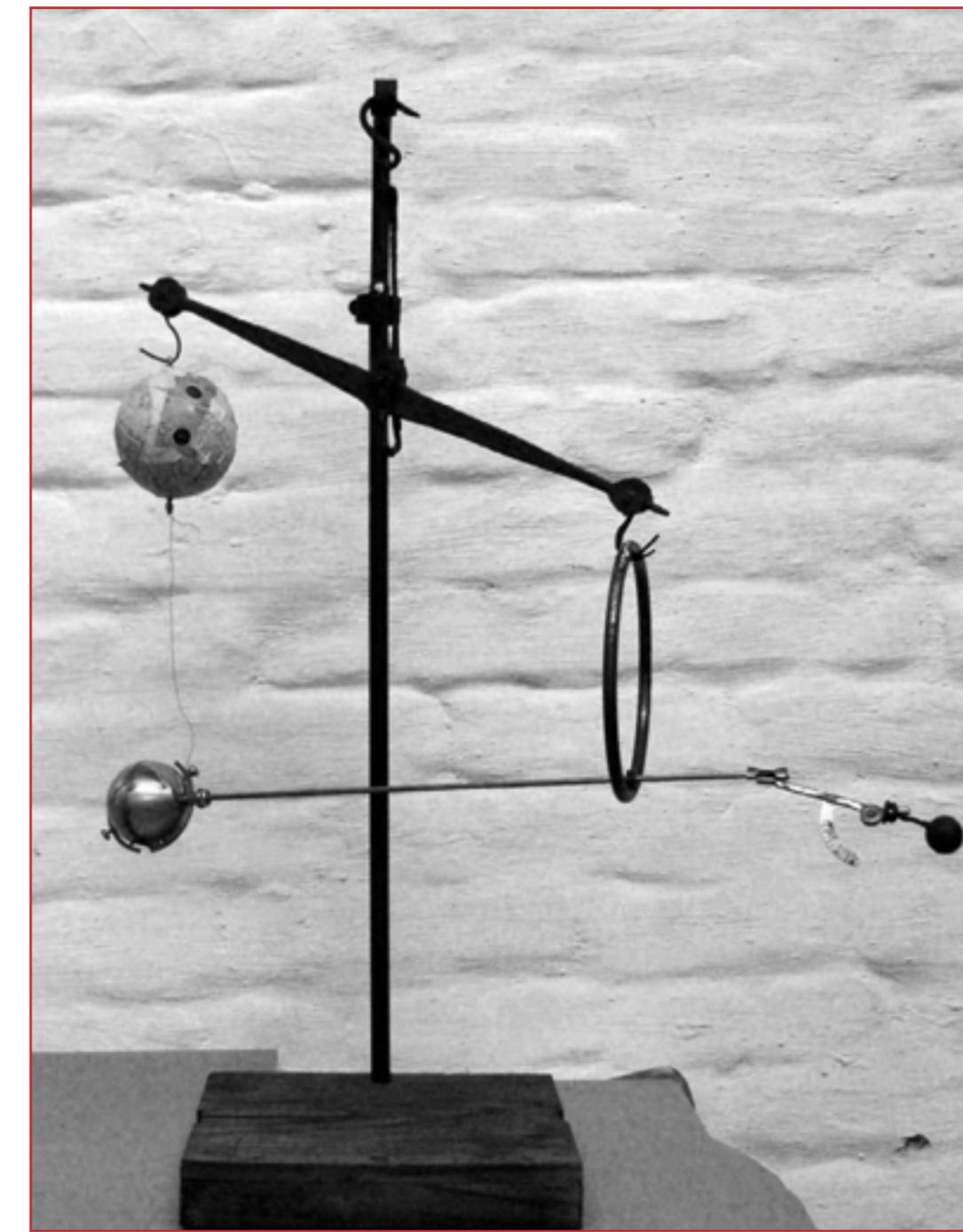
BRUSSELS // 2005
150cm x 20cm // metal structure





planetarium

B R U S S E L S // 2 0 0 5
40cm x 35cm // metal structure



equilibrium

B R U S S E L S // 2 0 0 5
55cm x 40cm // metal structure

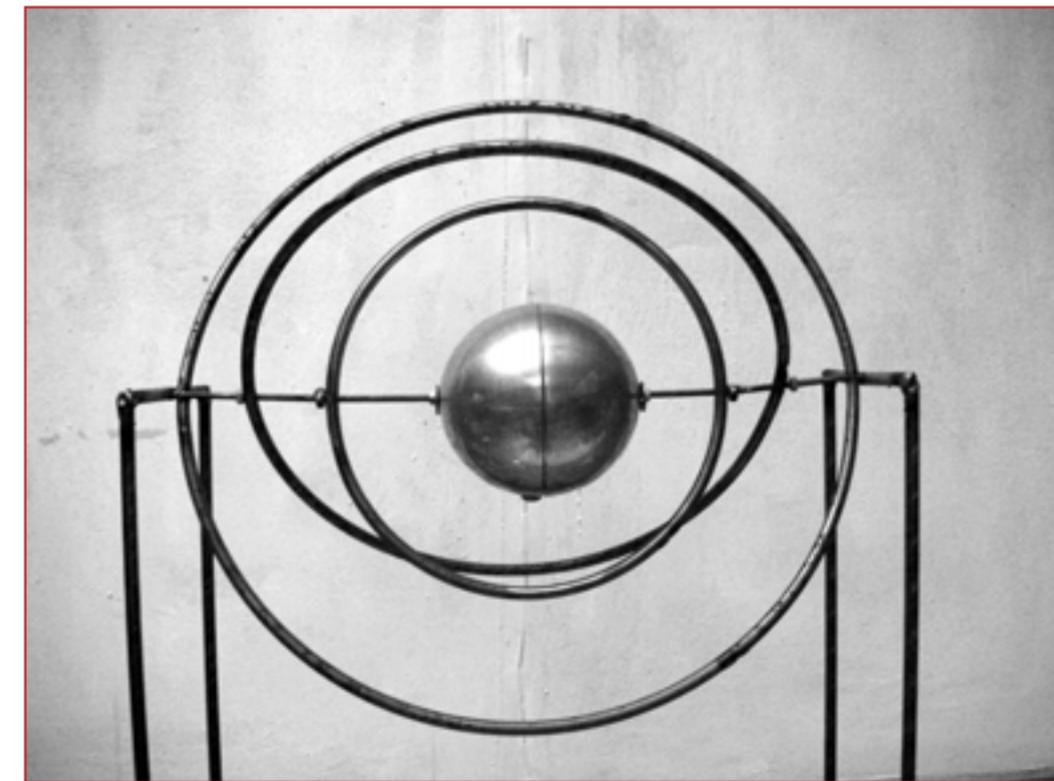
gravitation & space

BRUSSELS // 2005
45cm x 30cm // metal structure



circles

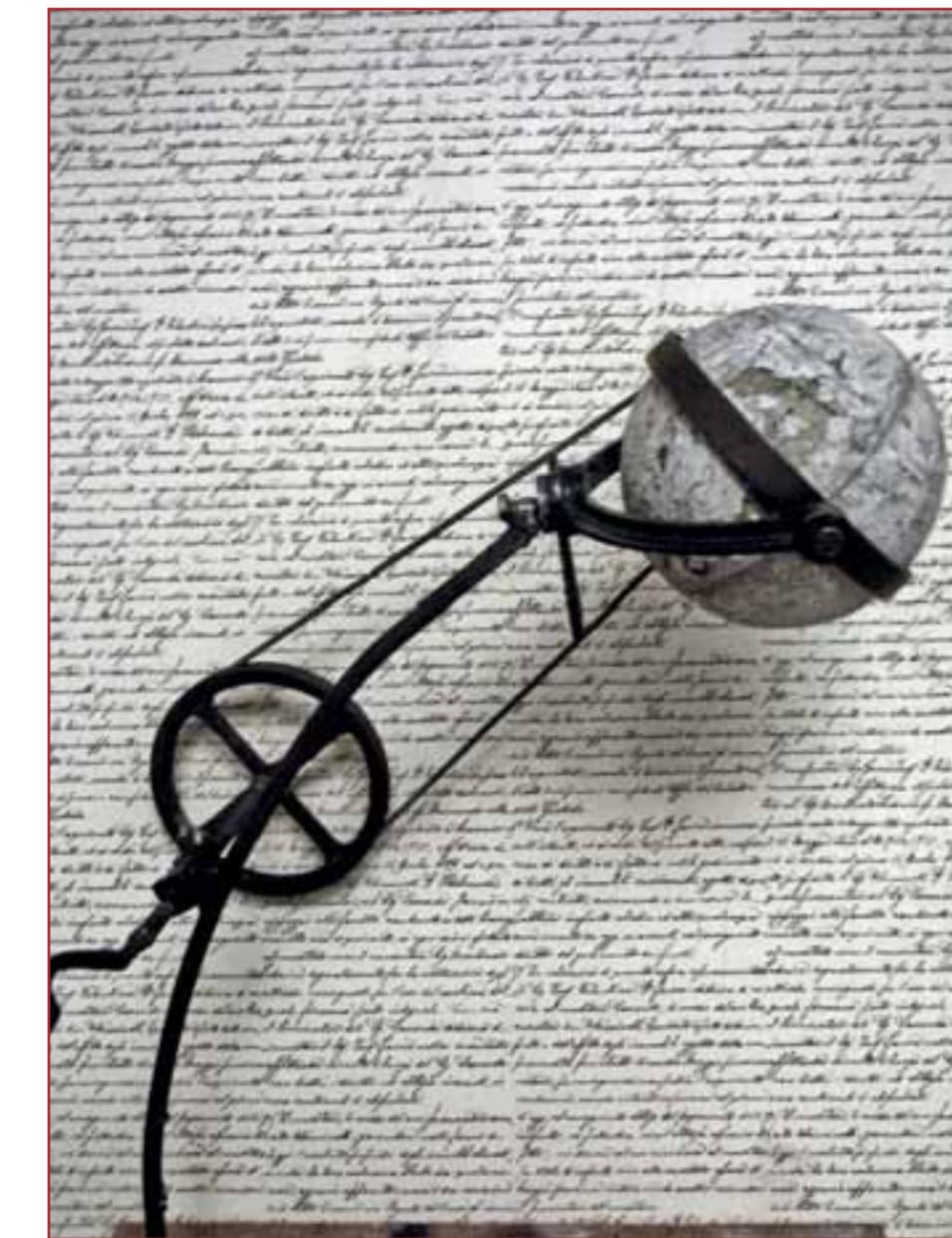
BRUSSELS // 2005
120cm x 40cm // metal structure





poids éternel

BRUSSELS // 2005
35cm x 25cm x 15 cm // mixed media installation



monde perceptuel

BRUSSELS // 2005
45cm x 40cm // mixed media installation

photography

travelling

LONDON // 2006

122cm x 80cm // mixed media on photo-sensibilized canvas





tate modern part.1 ▶

LONDON // 2005

180cm x 120cm // mixed media on photo-sensibilized canvas

tate modern part.2 ▶

LONDON // 2005

180cm x 120cm // mixed media on photo-sensibilized canvas

tate modern part.3 ▶

LONDON // 2005

160cm x 120cm // mixed media on photo-sensibilized canvas





victoria station

LONDON // 2006

110cm x 92 cm // mixed media on photo-sensibilized canvas

tianmuxi lu

SHANGHAI // 2007
84cm x 60cm // mixed media on photo-sensibilized canvas



fietser

SHANGHAI // 2007
33cm x 20cm // mixed media on photo-sensibilized canvas





rainy day

LONDON // 2006
70 cm x 50cm // mixed media on photo-sensibilized wood



leaving

LONDON // 2006
80cm x 70cm // mixed media on photo-sensibilized canvas

moganshan lu

SHANGHAI // 2007

105 cm x 75cm // mixed media on photo-sensibilized canvas



macao road

SHANGHAI // 2007

64cm x 49cm // mixed media on photo-sensibilized canvas





metropolis

LONDON // 2005
34cm x 24cm // mixed media on photo-sensibilized canvas



paseo de gracia

BARCELONA // 2006
33cm x 24cm // mixed media on photo-sensibilized canvas

the bund

SHANGHAI // 2007
124cm x 70cm // mixed media on photo-sensibilized canvas



piccadilly

LONDON // 2006
70cm x 40cm // mixed media on photo-sensibilized wood





carsamba pazari

ISTANBUL // 2006
170cm x 95cm // mixed media on photo-sensibilized canvas

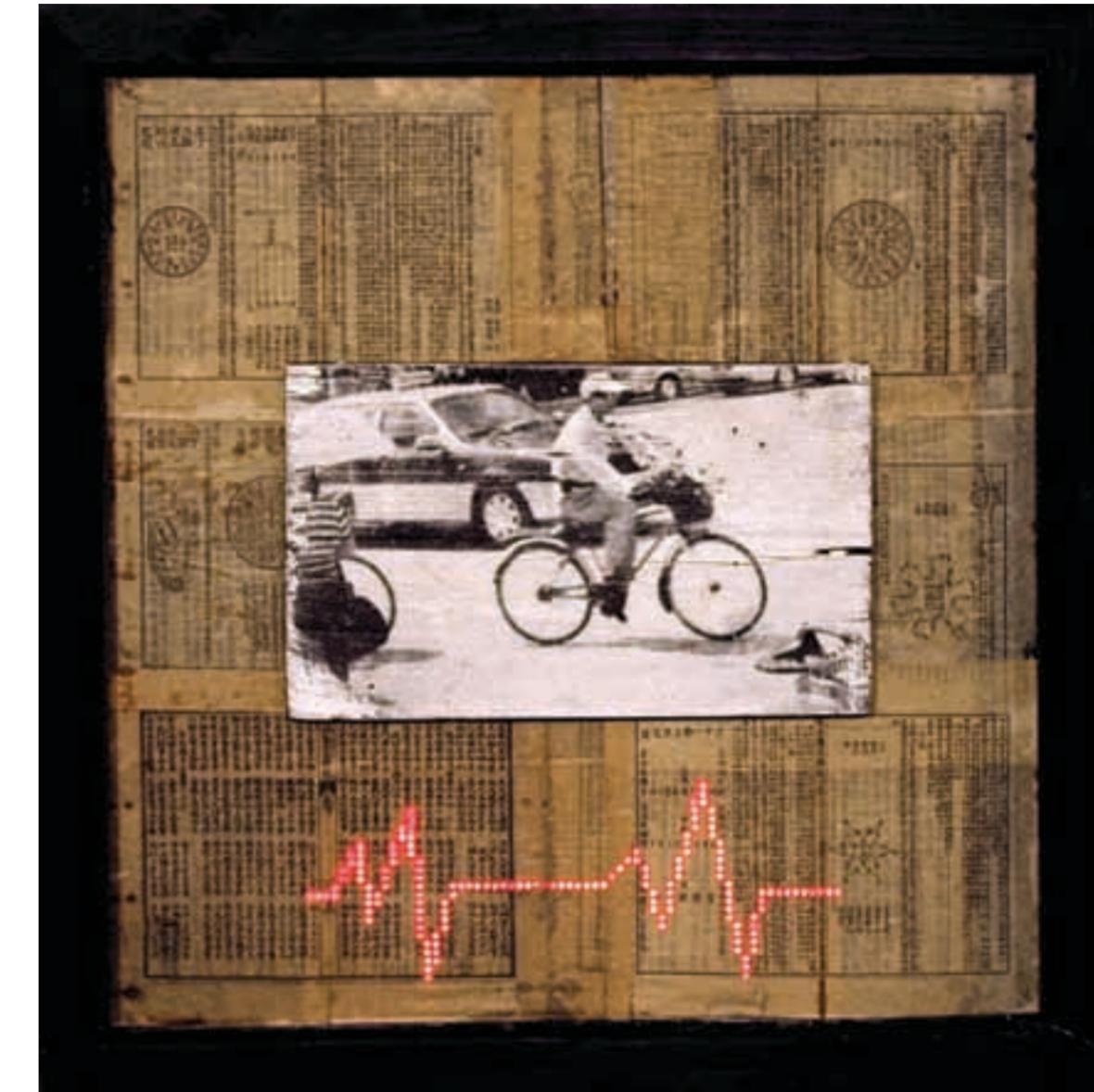
mixedmedia

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city beat

SHANGHAI // 2007

60cm x 62cm // LED display, mixed media on photo-sensibilized canvas



rain shadow

SHANGHAI // 2007

89cm x 76cm // LED display, mixed media on photo-sensibilized canvas



with a view

SHANGHAI // 2007
87cm x 73 cm // LED display, mixed media on photo-sensibilized canvas



I WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL THE PEOPLE WHO HELPED REALIZE THIS BOOK, ESPECIALLY :
HAROLD & ELKE EINSMAN, THOMAS CHARVERIAT, MARGHERITA SALMASO, YANG LONGHAI,
ALLARD VAN HOORN, ZU YUMEI, ALEXANDRA VERHAEST, LUCAS & OLIVIA GURDJIAN,
FRIENDS & FAMILY.

CHRISTOPHE DEMAÎTRE



christophe demaitre

CHRISTOPHE DEMAITRE (BELGIUM 1968) IS AN IMAGE HUNTER. HE MASTERS A WIDE RANGE OF DIFFERENT MEDIA SUCH AS FRESCO PAINTING, CHARCOAL DRAWING, ENGRAVING ON ZINC AND PHOTOGRAPHY. WHILE LIVING AND WORKING IN SHANGHAI, SÃO PAULO AND BRUSSELS, HE INCORPORATED THE GRAPHICAL ELEGANCE OF ASIA, THE TEMPERAMENT THAT IS SOUTH-AMERICA AND THE GREAT EUROPEAN ART HISTORY. HIS TRAVELS PROFOUNDLY INFLUENCED HIS CREATIVITY. IN INDONESIA HE WAS CONFRONTED WITH THE PRIMITIVE CULTURE OF THE MENTAWAIS. THEIR IMAGE CULTURE INSPIRED HIM IN THE SEARCH FOR HIS DRAWING STYLE. THE ARTE POVERA, WHICH HE DISCOVERED IN BARCELONA, INFLUENCED HIS WAY OF COMBINING MATERIALS. HIS RESIDENCY IN ITALY HAS GRANTED HIM TO DISCOVER THE USE OF PIGMENTS AND TO EXPERIMENT WITH DIFFERENT TECHNIQUES OF FRESCO PAINTING. THE METROPOL OF SHANGHAI ALLOWED HIM TO REALIZE WORK ON A BIGGER SCALE AND THE COLLABORATION WITH ISLAND6 INSPIRED HIM TO INTEGRATE TECHNOLOGY SUCH AS LED DISPLAYS AND MICROCHIPS INTO HIS WORK.

THE ARTIST CURRENTLY EXHIBITS ON A REGULAR BASIS IN INTERNATIONAL ART SHOWS AND DIFFERENT GALLERIES SUCH AS PALAZZO CORRER VENICE, ARTANTIDE, VERONA AND MAC-METISSATGE AT BARCELONA. HIS WORK IS PART OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COLLECTIONS ALL OVER EUROPE AND ASIA.

2007 ISLAND6 ARTS CENTER, SHANGHAI - CHINA
BOYCOTT GALLERY, BRUSSELS - BELGIUM

2006 ARTANTIDE, VERONA, ITALY
MANAART, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM
ISLAND6 ARTS CENTER, SHANGHAI, CHINA
KAFKA AWARD, 1ST MINISTER CABINET, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

2005 ARTEESPACE JACQ MOTTE, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM
MANAART, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

2004 MANAART, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

2003 DUOMO ART GALLERY, VERONA, ITALY
ARTFARM SITUARSI 03, BONAVIGO, ITALY
WAOUW GALLERY, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

2002 UNIVERSITAT POMPEU FABRA, BARCELONA, SPAIN
CCB, ESP-4, BARCELONA, SPAIN
MAC-METISSATGE, BARCELONA, SPAIN
ISTITUTO ENOLOGICO ITALIANO, VERONA, ITALY

2001 RIPPETA PRIZE XII ED., ROME, ITALY
PALAZZO CORRER, VENICE, ITALY
ART GALLERY STUDIO PALAZZI, VENICE, ITALY
SAN GIO VIDEO FESTIVAL, VERONA, ITALY

2000 PALAZZO CORRER, VENICE, ITALY
ART GALLERY, VIA DEL CORSO, ROME, ITALY
CIAK CINEMA D'ESSAY, VERONA, ITALY

1998 WEST-RAND GALLERY, BRUSSELS, BRUSSELS
ARCIPELAGO CULTURAL CENTRE, TRENTO, ITALY
PROVINCE ARTHALL OF VERONA, VERONA, ITALY

1997 TEG-SEQUIZ MUSEUM, TRANSYLVANIA, ROMANIA

1996 MAGAZIJN THEATRE-GALLERY, GHENT, BELGIUM

island6 arts center

SHANGHAI // 2007

4.3 ha. // wooden arcades and red brick walls



PHOTOGRAPH BY DAAN NUOPPEN

AT 120 MOGANSANHAN RD, A LANE LEADS ONTO A LARGE OPEN GREEN AREA SURROUNDED BY THE SUZHOU CREEK. THERE, IN SEVERE CONTRAST TO SHANGHAI'S EVER-TOWERING SKYSCRAPERS, STANDS ISLAND6, A FOUR STORY RED BRICK BUILDING. ITS HISTORY: SHANGHAI TYPICAL.

ISLAND6 AND ITS TWO NEIGHBORING BUILDINGS WERE ESTABLISHED, LIKE MOST FLOUR MILLS AND BREWERIES, ALONG THE SUZHOU CREEK AT A TIME WHEN THE RIVER NURTURED A MAJOR INDUSTRIAL BASE IN SHANGHAI. THE THREE BUILDINGS (BUILT 1913-1930) BECAME PART OF A COMPLEX, DESIGNED TO HOUSE THE OFFICE HEADQUARTERS AND DEPOTS OF FOOSING FLOUR MILL. SIGNED BY ATKINSON & DALLAS, A BRITISH ARCHITECTURE AND CIVIL ENGINEERING FIRM THAT THRIVED IN THE CITY DURING THE EARLY 1900'S, THE STRUCTURES ARE REPRESENTATIVES OF TYPICAL MASONRY ARCHITECTURE, ORIGINALLY CONSTRUCTED WITH WOODEN ARCADES AND RED BRICK WALLS.

IN THE 1900'S ISLAND6 WAS USED AS THE 'SMALL PACKAGED FLOUR' WAREHOUSE. LATER, RONG YI REN, THE FORMER CHINESE VICE PRESIDENT AND TEXTILE MAGNATE, PURCHASED IT. THE BUILDING HAS SURVIVED A DERISORY FIGHT WITH THE CITY; IN JULY 2003, THE COMPLEX WAS THREATENED BY IMMINENT DEMOLITION TO MAKE ROOM FOR REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS. LUCKILY, THE DOOM OF WAREHOUSES ALONG THE SUZHOU CREEK WAS FOUGHT BY A SERIES OF CULTURAL CAMPAIGNS RUN BY ARCHITECTS AND UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS. ISLAND6 WAS DECLARED A CULTURAL HERITAGE AND IS PROTECTED BY THE SHANGHAI MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT.

ISLAND6 NOW RISES AS A CENTER FOR THE ARTS, ONE THAT AIMS TO INTERACT WITH THE CULTURAL RELICS THAT SURROUND IT. AT A TIME WHEN FUNDING FOR THE ARTS HAS BECOME PRECARIOUS, AND MANY ART SPACES HAVE HAD TO CHANGE THEIR MISSIONS TO SURVIVE, ISLAND6 REMAINS COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING YOUNG AND EMERGING ARTISTS AND PRESENTING INNOVATIVE, RISK-TAKING PROGRAMS THAT EXPLORE NEW CURATORIAL MODELS, CHALLENGE THE DEFINITIONS AND BOUNDARIES OF ART, AND ENGAGE IN KEY ISSUES OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY.

ISLAND6 IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION GOVERNED BY VOLUNTARY STAFF, DEDICATED TO THE SUPPORT OF ITS ARTISTS AND TO THE CONSTANT INITIATION OF SITE-SPECIFIC PROJECTS. ISLAND6'S RESIDENCY PROGRAM ALLOWS ARTISTS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD TO COME TO SHANGHAI AND PRODUCE LOCALLY INSPIRED WORK. THE RESIDENCY FOCUSES ON PRODUCTION AND IS FOLLOWED BY AN EXHIBITION. CHRISTOPHE DEMAÎTRE COMPLETED TWO EXHIBITIONS DURING HIS RESIDENCY AT ISLAND6.