



Pascal Dombis

EURASIA

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DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

It is with great excitement that The Cat Street Gallery presents the hotly anticipated solo exhibition **Eurasia**, showcasing the latest body of work by the hugely talented French artist, **Pascal Dombis**.

Returning to Hong Kong with his second exposition at the gallery, Pascal's latest series of hypnotic works pack a powerful sensory punch, pairing intensive technological processes with a fascination for exploring a visual paradox.

Pascal executes his unique approach to interpreting the complexities of visual environments with continual originality. Whether creating lenticulars, light drawings, video works or installation, the paradoxical imagery which faces the viewer creates a strange feeling - one of intrigue, uncertainty and a strange satisfaction. For it is in the ever-shifting qualities of the layered convoluted shapes and symbols within the works that make the viewer truly aware that it is he or she that alters what he or she sees.

It is thrilling for us to represent such an artist here, particularly in Asia as it is a place key to this series of works - where a philosophical meeting of 'East' and 'West' results in a powerful aesthetic. This is highly detailed work built on a huge conceptual scale - charting an allegorical journey across a 'continuous continent' - cemented by the ideas of great philosophers like Nietzsche and great artists like Beuys. Pascal displays an unmistakable talent and vision for a new way of seeing: finding a coexistence between order and chaos in a post-modern world.

Powered by self-designed algorithms or through harnessing a multitude of images from the internet and Google, Pascal's climactic yet unpredictable 'immense digital tapestries' have set his artwork apart from any other. Acquired by both international museums and private collectors alike, Pascal Dombis has an unwavering effect on those who see his pieces and read into the questions posed. We greatly look forward to bringing such an exciting body of work to Asia, and invite everyone to come and see this unmissable exhibition for themselves.

Mandy d'Abo

Founder and Director
The Cat Street Gallery



A NEW REGIME OF IMAGES

"To step back from things so as to blur many of their details, to supplement them with your gaze, in order to go on seeing them; or else to look at things from a certain angle; or to place them so that they can only be seen in a gleam and are partially hidden; or otherwise to look at them through stained glass or in the light of the setting sun; or finally to give them a surface, an outer skin which is not entirely transparent: that is all we can learn from artists." (1)

It is in these premonitory terms that Nietzsche defines the "subtle force" of art. Prolonged viewing, multiple perspectives, proximity and distance in the play of detail, and lastly the diaphanous light of transparency which creates surface effects, an "outer skin". Such is the new regime of post-virtual images that Pascal Dombis has chosen to explore. Whether they be programmed by algorithms or taken directly in their multitude from the Internet using Google, whether they appear or disappear according to your angle of vision or bodily position, they always proliferate by tens of thousands like an immense digital tapestry, the epidermis of the world. As if the "Nothing but images" proffered by Nietzsche's Prometheus in his flight over the Caucasus had become reality in the imaginary geography of *Eurasia*, from Paris / Düsseldorf to Hong Kong (2).

Eurasia, then, as this was the title of the works on show at the TZR Gallery in Düsseldorf, represents a continuous continent forged by one conquest after another, from Asia Minor to contemporary Asia. On the ground can be seen, similar to the carpet ribbon at the Palais Royal (*Text(e)-Fill(e)s*), a flat 8 metre surface like an immense real-imaginary continental map. A great white band, an empty vertical space, showing the direction, and then, surprise, surprise, texts in German: *Eurasia*, or rather *Eurasien*, revealing nearly 50 years later, in the selfsame town of Düsseldorf, transcriptions of Joseph Beuys's oral texts from the 1960s, programmed algorithmically and proliferating endlessly.

Beuys' *Partitur zu Eurasienstab* (1967) - palpable with its abstract landscapes and its twin directions - spells out Europe / Asia, also West and East Germany. Following on from this continent, is an imaginary journey leading back to prehistoric times with its animals, shamanic rituals and nomadic culture. Felt throughout is the archetypal journey consisting of traces between past and present: *Gengis Khan's Messages*, and the *Transsibirische Bahn*, the famous train journey which it is still possible to go on. *Eurasia* becomes a symphony and a performance, a graphic utopia transcending the divide between the rational civilised culture of "Western Man" and the emotional Barbarian culture of "Eastern Man" - a theme taken up in Beuys' *Books from the Western Man* (3).

In going from *Fluxus* to the fluxes of global culture, Pascal Dombis shows us the distance separating the starting point from the reinvented finishing point, in this map on the ground, between text and image, microscopic detail and the view from above. The vision of the cartographical eye, which I would liken to that of Icarus, suggests real and fictional relations between body and sight, the details forever changing and endlessly multiplying within a mobile space in which the aesthetics of perspective dominate those of stasis. Lines everywhere, as in another work from the "Extra_Vague" exhibition at the RX Gallery in Paris, show partial curves knitting together so as to form lines on the screen, myriads of lines proliferating in a veritable state of artificial non-organic life which would have pleased Walter Benjamin, sensitive to "the sex appeal of the inorganic". Little by little another world emerges from this technological "shamanism", equally to be found in several works on show at the Cat Street Gallery (Hong Kong). Here the new regime of images is not the result of algorithmic programming, but comes from the capture of thousands of images on Google, in Western and Eastern languages transferred onto panels where everything is suspended. Close up there are the details, further away everything disappears and a black or red, white and blue spiral appears. The body creates the image in these diptychs opposing the West and the East. On the Asian side: adverts, dustbins, faces, an entire mode of consumption with its writings. On the Western side, here and there, a skull, a flower, a face or a fashion picture. Everyone sees what they want or are able to see in this planetary panoptic which superposes maps in order to better create something else, abstract spiral diagrams, a universal leitmotiv particularly dear to the artist (4). For spirals are vortices of the infinite, time rolled up upon itself, both original and ephemeral, the temporal modulation of an eternal return.

The modern era invented the regime of crystalline images analysed by Gilles Deleuze, time-images in which past and present are woven together (5). Mirrors, glass architecture leaving no traces, reflective surfaces - everything was designed to multiply reflections and appearances in Duchamp-style mirroring. The literal or symbolic transparency of all these crystal circles created the time-image in which the imperceptible erupted as in the great hall of mirrors at the end of *The Lady from Shanghai*. Who kills whom? Who sees what, and where? Questions without answers in the crystalline vitality of an art which the baroque style took to its limits.

No such thing as regards the new regime of virtual and post-virtual flux-images. They have lost their memory and the "double vision" which allowed past and present to coexist. The vision generated by the mobility of body and gaze oscillates between "seeing too much" and "not seeing enough". Too much, because it is impossible to study all the details simultaneously, not enough since the perpetually fluctuating images return to a ghostly state from which

everything is reborn differently: spirals and spirals, curved shapes and curved shapes. A strange feeling creeps up on you while contemplating Pascal Dombis's "abstract" image processes, for the words *Right* and *Wrong* can change into their opposite, and order can lead to potential or actual chaos in all these "delays on screen" which parody Duchamp's "delays on glass" and modify the spectator's role.

Cinema created movement-images and images in movement. When used artistically, the new technologies create fractals, rhizomes and the movements of and in the image. We have gone from the multiple facets of a mirrored reality to an epidermis of layered images. A panoptic of the interface and the artefact in which curved topologies can emerge from what seems to be a geometrically ordered outer skin, in a minimalist Baroque all of structural fluidity and infinite visual pathways. Between Alice through the looking-glass and Icarus soaring across infinite skies, the modernist monochrome makes a sudden reappearance in works consisting of multiple digital monochromes piled on top of one another to create fleshless luminous "post-digital mirrors". But in this new "gaze craze" it is distance which allows you to attain a kind of indeterminateness without limits, a fourth dimension which opens onto an aesthetics of ephemeral and stratified temporality.

Several works of the Hong Kong *Eurasia* exhibition are called *Xplosion*. Certainly they embody an algorithmic and digital explosion. Multiple crosses, symbols of the West and Beuys's signature, are superposed upon a Chinese ideogram: *ya*, which means Asia. Now, as Serge François indicates in his commentary on *ya*, "the choice of this ideogram to signify Asia is very recent. In fact this name translates the European word "Asia" – whereas China called itself the Middle Empire for thousands of years. The pictogram itself represents the similarity and duality of the royal tombs of the Shang dynasty, which are orientated according to the four cardinal points of the compass" (6). In this highly symbolic arrangement, the two Eurasian worlds are placed one upon the other: in between all is black, white and grey, rippling with explosive layers. Perhaps an image of globalisation lies within, somewhere between the two diptychs in dialogue and the risk of explosion.

Perhaps a different China is lurking in these new continents and this Eurasia of furtive images. An allusive and distant China, where the void is understood to be the "nodal point of the virtual and becoming", according to François Cheng (7). I mull upon Walter Benjamin in 1938, at the eve of worldwide catastrophe, deciphering signs and Chinese paintings at the French National Library: "The multitude of likenesses that they contain stir them to life. These virtual likenesses... form a mirror reflecting thought in an atmosphere of likenesses and resonances" (8). Such is perhaps the new regime of flux-images which Pascal Dombis has made his own: weightless, infinitely changing, untamed "thought-images" whose haphazard presence is nonetheless captured and controlled. Their "fleeting nature" merges "with the penetration of the real... What they substantiate is no more substantial than clouds."

Christine Buci-Glucksmann

Translation by Jonathan Pollock

Christine Buci-Glucksmann is a French philosopher and contemporary art specialist. She is the author of several essays on art, including "Baroque Reason: The Aesthetics of Modernity", "L'esthétique du Temps au Japon: Du Zen au Rituel" and "Les modernités chinoises".

Notes

(1) Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Folio, p. 204

(2) *Eurasia*, TZR Galerie (Düsseldorf), April 20 - June 2. *Extra_Vague*, Galerie RX (Paris), June 7 - July 20. *Eurasia*, The Cat Street Gallery (Hong Kong) November 21 - December 23.

(3) *Joseph Beuys*, Schirmer / Moser, 2010, p. 127

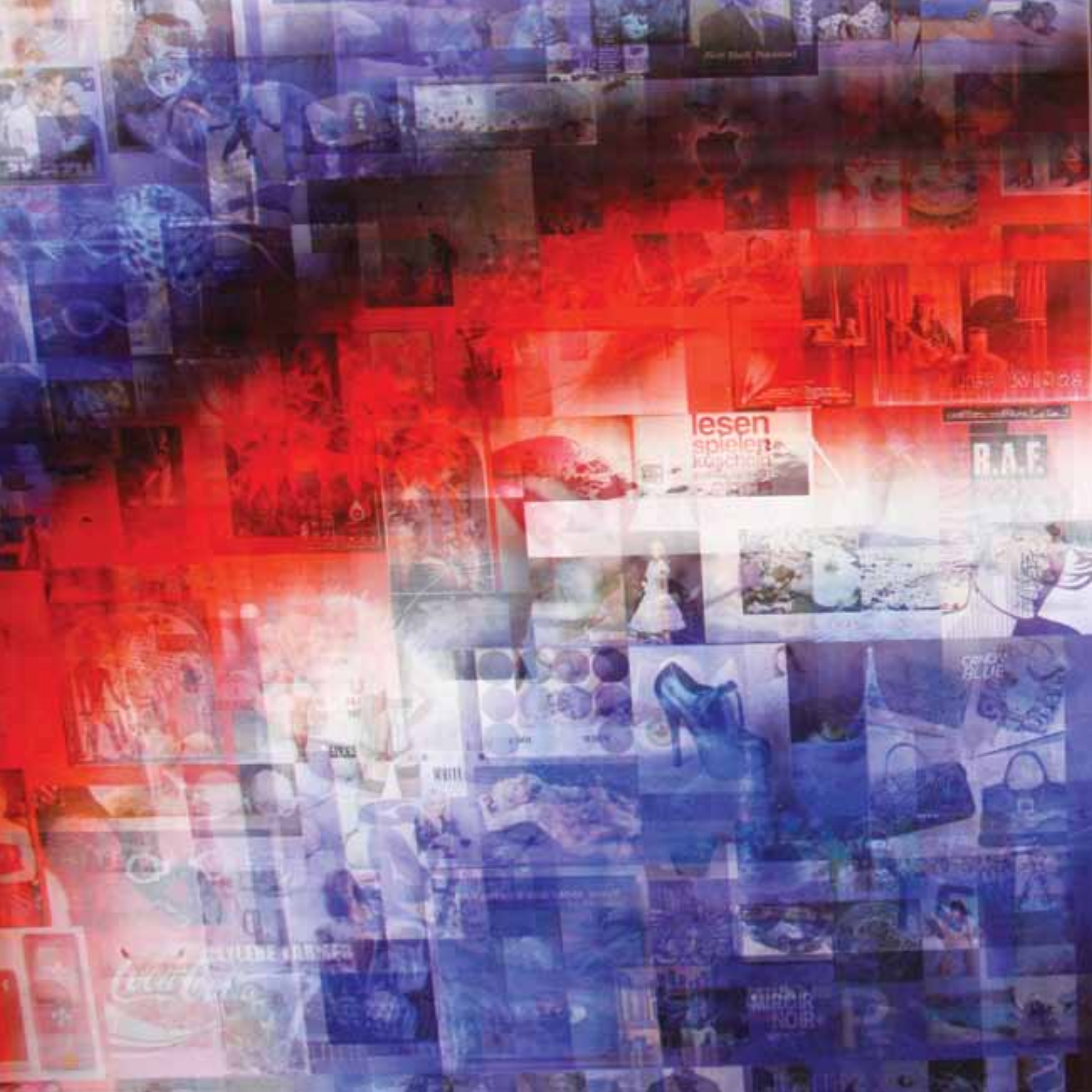
(4) Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Time spirals: from the immemorial to the ephemeral*, exhibition catalogue, The Cat Street Gallery, 2009

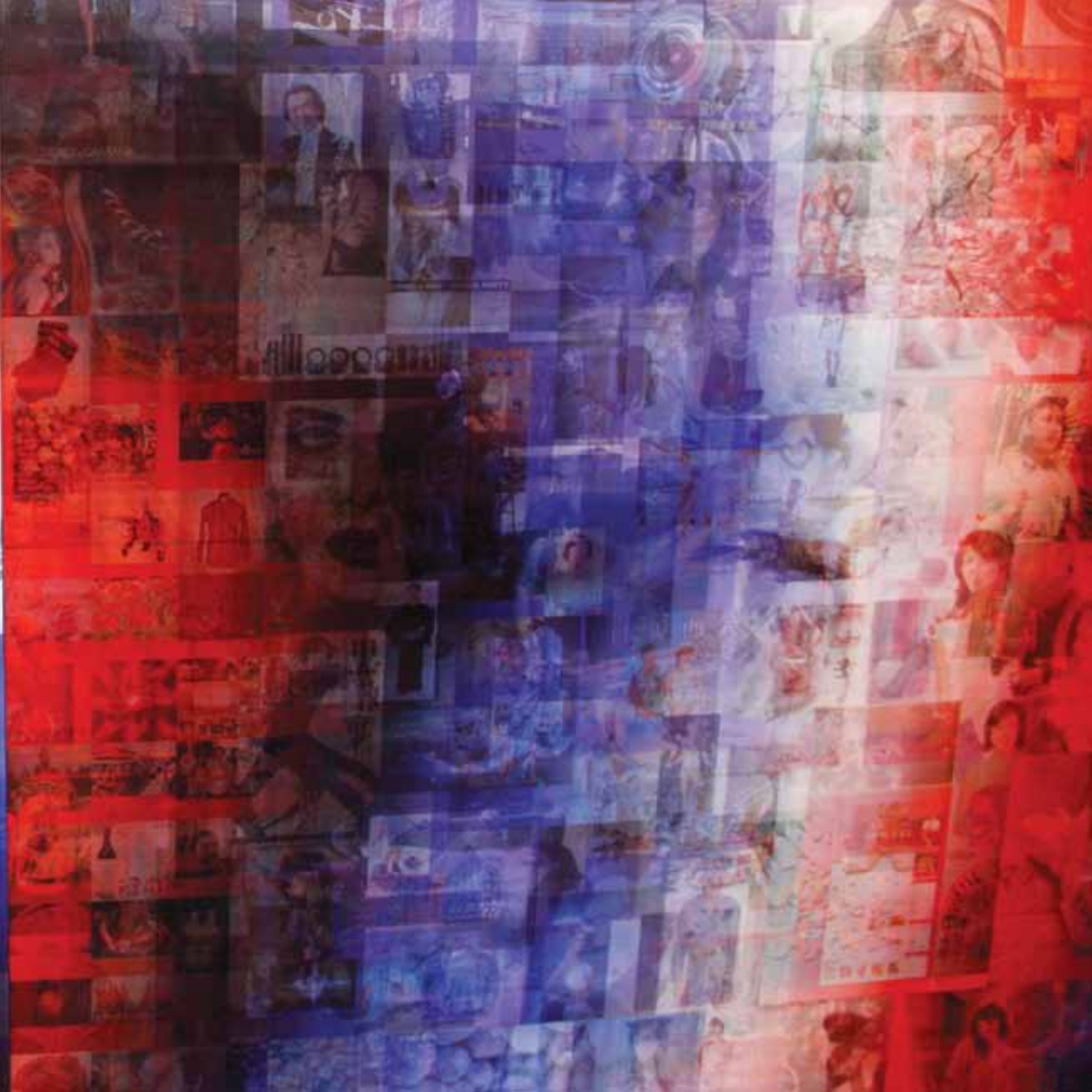
(5) Gilles Deleuze : *L'image temps*, Les Editions de minuit, 1985, chapter 4. Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *La Folie du voir. Une esthétique du virtuel*, Galilée, 2002, p. 205

(6) Serge François, *Eurasia*, exhibition catalogue, TZR Galerie, 2012

(7) François Cheng, *Vide et plein*, Le Seuil, 1979, p. 33

(8) Walter Benjamin, *Ecrits français*, Gallimard, 1991, p. 257-258





COMMENTARY NOTES ON 亞

According to Father Leon Wieger's dictionary (published in 1915), the Chinese character 亞 pronounced "ya", and used to refer to "Asia", has a balanced and almost geometric pattern. It has been traditionally associated with 2 meanings: "secondary" and "alike".

From a calligraphic point of view, the pictogram is composed of a figure with 3 strokes, curved outward to the left, and its symmetrical part, inverted to the right. The figure is capped by a straight line on its top, and a similar one is to be found at its base.

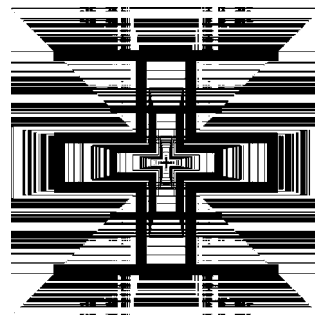
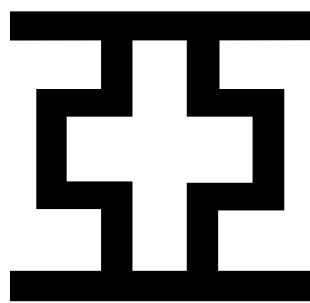
It would be quite wrong to see in this character the image of a cross as a proof of the influence of Western symbolism on a culture that obeys to totally different principles. The Chinese adoption of the "ya" character to represent the Asian continent is in fact very recent. It is used to render the Western concept of "Asia".

The word "Asia", as testified in the Greek language, has first been used to embody the nymph that is said to have given birth to Prometheus. Then, it has been used to describe what is currently known as Anatolia in Turkey around the fifth century B.C. During the Renaissance, the term ceased to refer to what had de facto become Asia Minor, but its new usage reflected the geographical shift to the Far East, corresponding to the recent discovery by the Europeans of that part of Asia.

China, which occupies the largest area, did not have a specific name for "Asia", being satisfied with the "zhong guo" term, the middle land, to describe its territory and that of its neighbours. Hence, the other Asian countries, which China considered as tributaries throughout its history, were located politically, symbolically and territorially in connection with China, and not with the mythical western territories.

Regarding the pronunciation, the use of the phoneme "ya", in "ya zhou" - Asian continent - does not have an obvious meaning. As always in the choice of Chinese characters, phonetics and semantics are divergent. Still, one can put forward the hypothesis that the racial similarity in the Far East population may have influenced the selection of the "ya" character through its "alike" significance. Similarly, the "secondary" seme to be found in "ya", may also lead to the idea of a second continent in relation to Europe, "ouzhou" Oouropa,. That tends to reinforce the idea that China has introduced in its language an originally Western concept which required a particular pictogram.

Serge-Félix Francois
Philosopher and sinologist



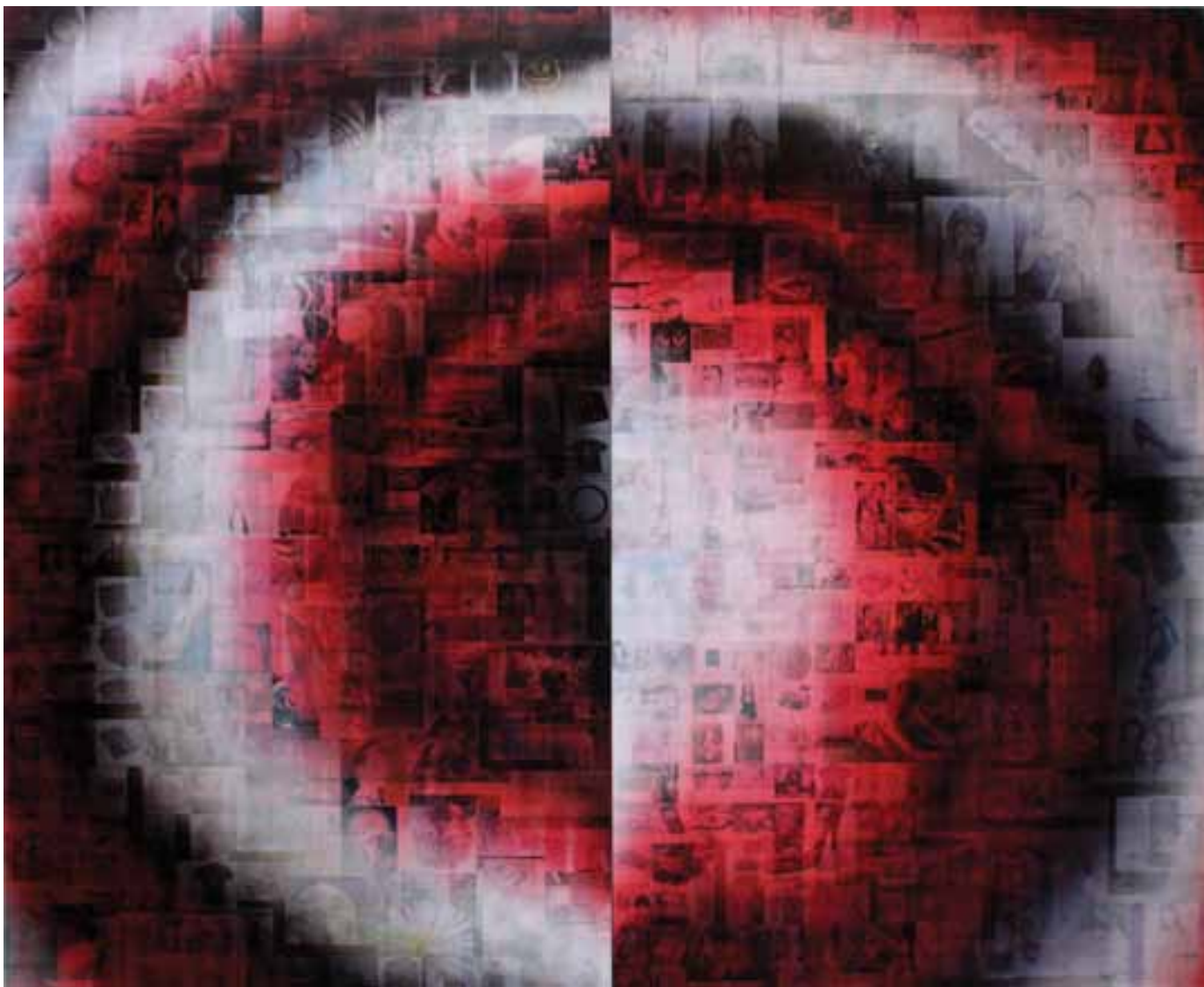


Plate 1: Google_RedBlackWhite_West/East (Eurasia)

Lenticular mounted on alu-dibon

220 x 180 cm (2 panels)

2010







Plate 2: Google_WhiteBlack_West/East (Eurasia)

Lenticular mounted on alu-dibon
180 x 120 cm (2 panels)
2012



Plate 3: CensorZip

Lenticular mounted on alu-dibon & PMMA (Plexiglas)
35 x 180 cm each (5 panels)
2011



Plate 4: Post_Digital_Mirror
Lenticular mounted on alu-dibon
270 x 120 cm (3 panels)
2010



Plate 5: Google_RKW_East/Google_RKW_West (Eurasia)

Lenticular mounted on alu-dibon

90 x 120 cm each (2 panels)

2010



Plate 6: The death of painting (Google)_After Rodchenko
Lenticular mounted on PMMA (Plexiglas)
55 x 70 cm each (3 panels)
2012

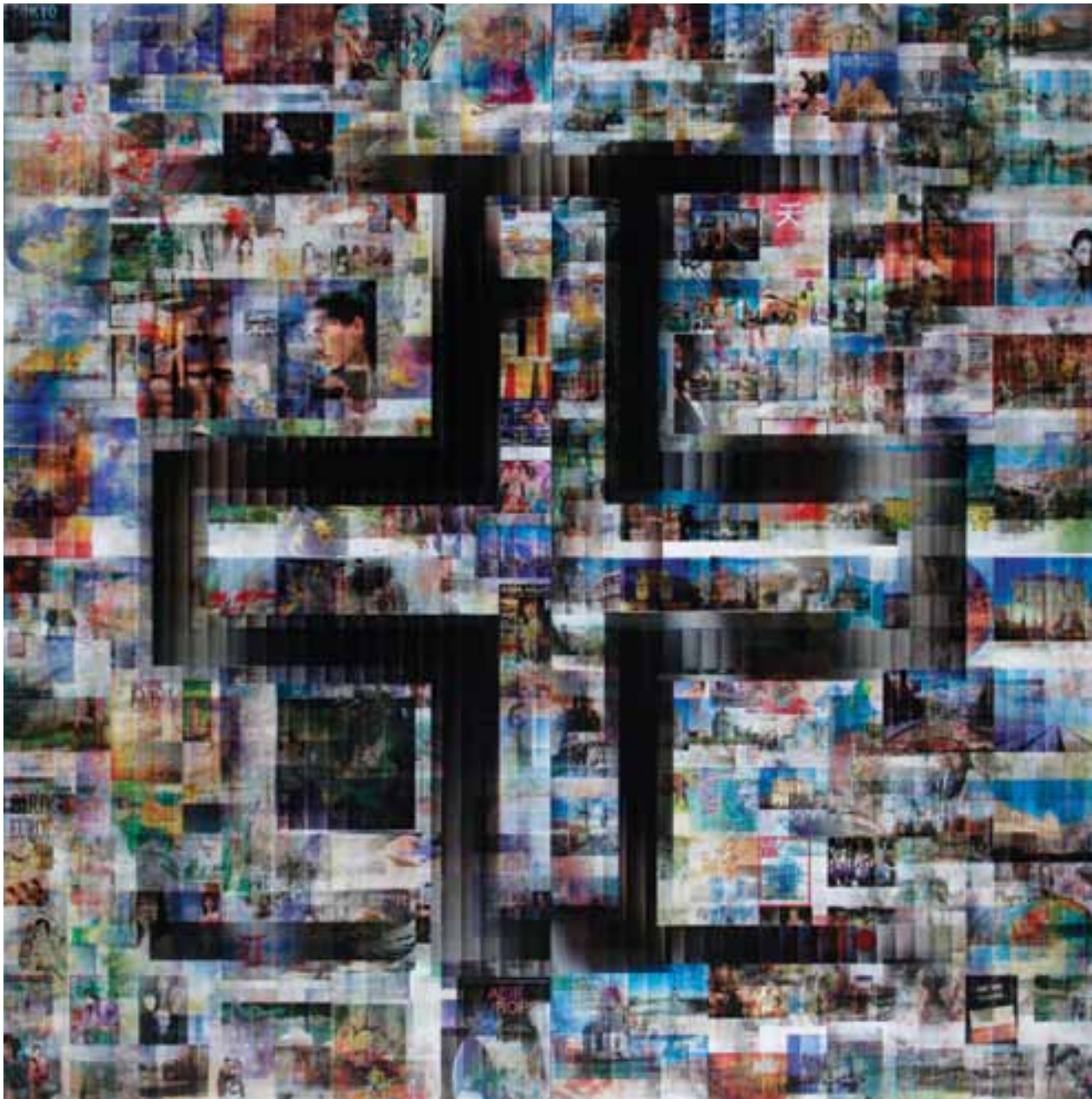


Plate 7: Eurasia (Google_Asia/Europa)
Lenticular mounted on alu-dibon
120 x 120 cm (2 panels)
2012





Plate 8: Google_CRACK (C1)
Lenticular mounted on alu-dibon
110 x 110 cm
2011

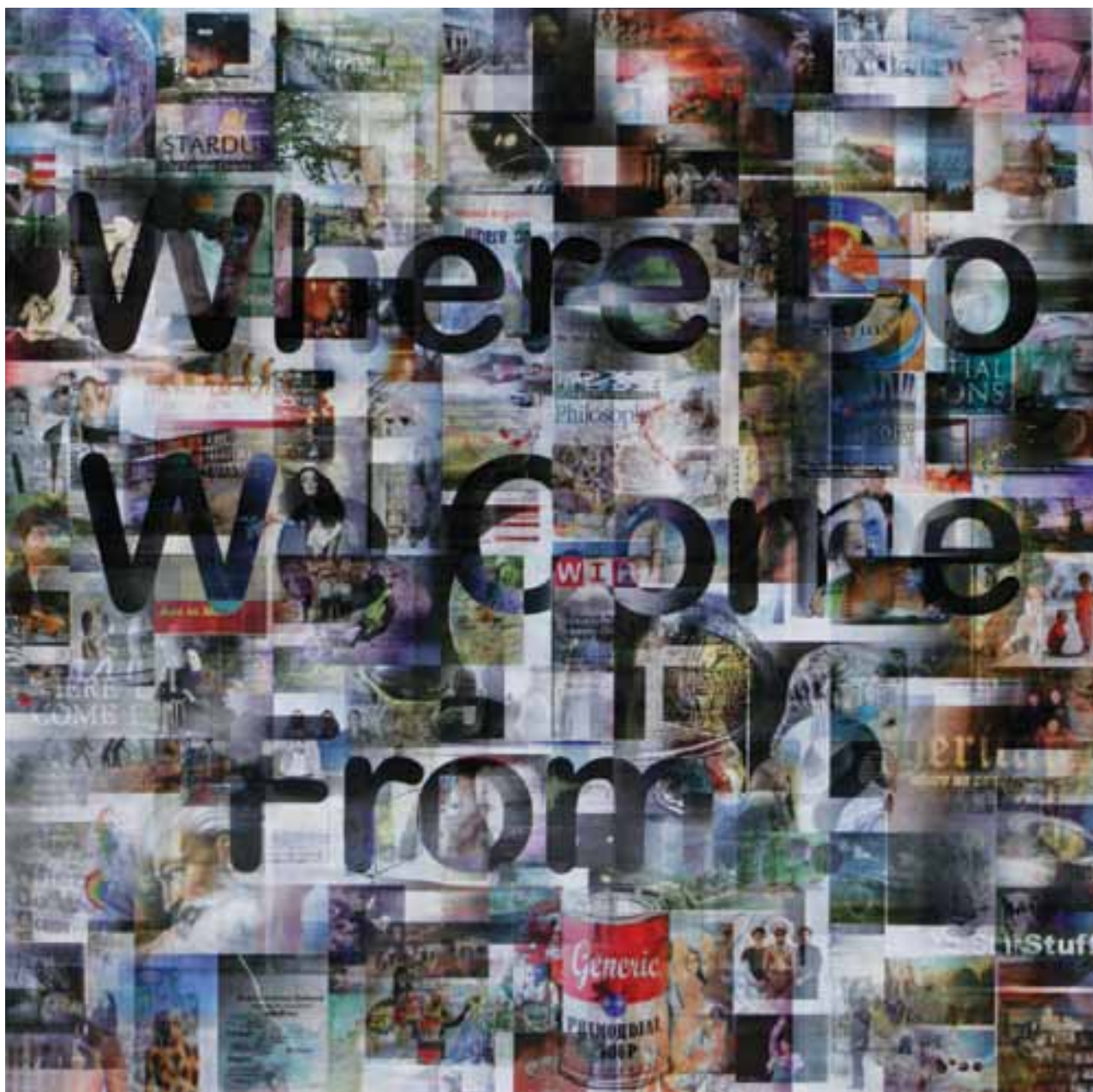


Plate 9: Where Do We Come From?

Lenticular mounted on alu-dibon
110 x 110 cm
2012



Plate 10: What Are We Here For?

Lenticular mounted on alu-dibon

110 x 110 cm

2011



Plate 11: Where Are We Going?
Lenticular mounted on alu-dibon
110 x 110 cm
2011



Plate 12: Google_OHO_AHA
Lenticular mounted on alu-dibon
110 x 110 cm
2011



Plate 13: Google_KW
Lenticular mounted on alu-dibon
110 x 110 cm
2009



Plate 14: Atomic_Xplosion I
Lenticular mounted on alu-dibon
90 x 120 cm
2011

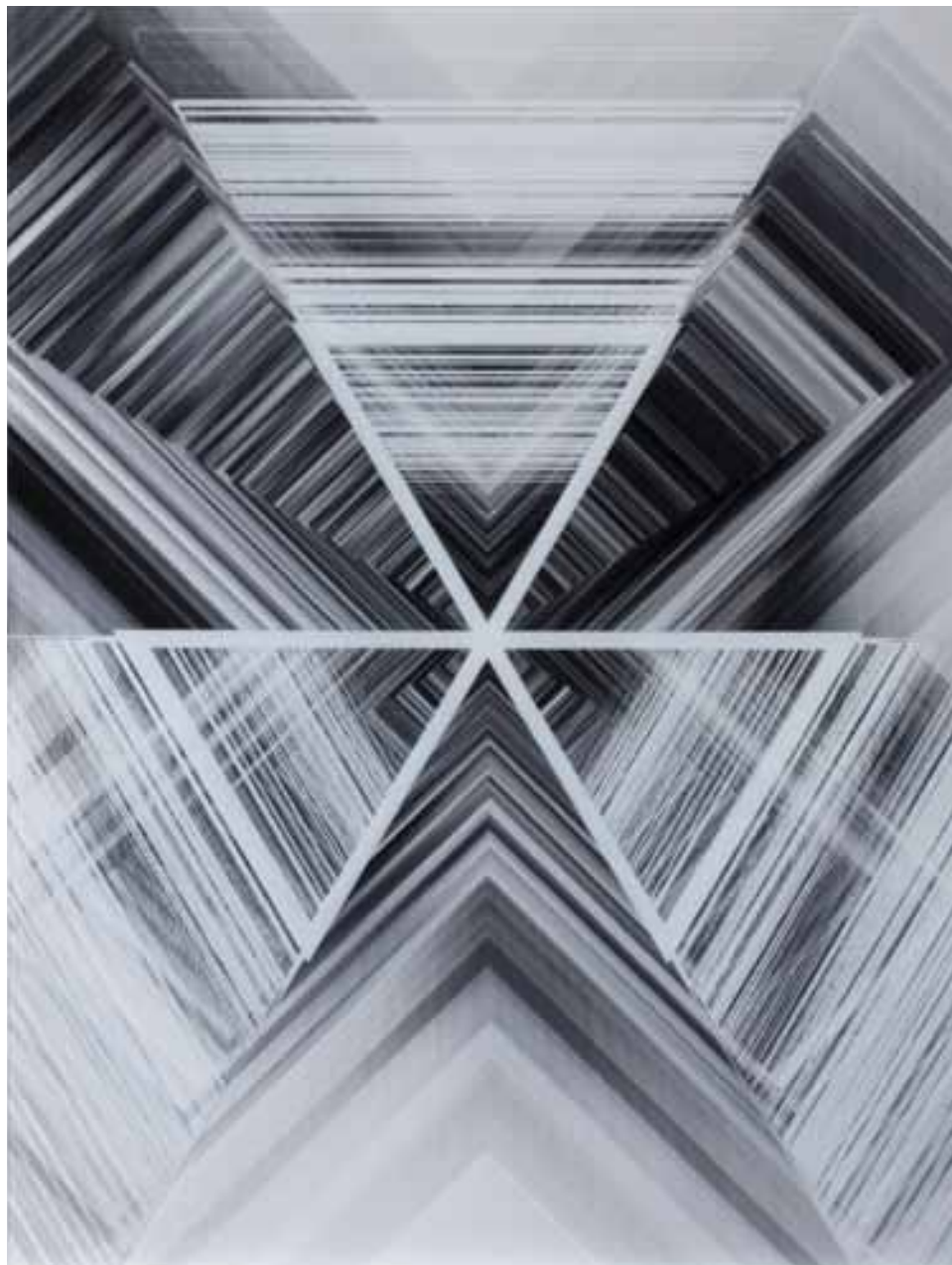


Plate 15: Atomic_Xplosion II
Lenticular mounted on alu-dibon
90 x 120 cm
2011







Plate 16: Figurative_Abstract (Google)
Lenticular mounted on alu-dibon
90 x 120 cm
2009



Plate 17: God_Is_Dead (Google)
Lenticular mounted on alu-dibon
90 x 120 cm
2011



Plate 18: Feed_Back (Google)

Lenticular mounted on alu-dibon

110 x 70 cm (2 panels)

2011



Plate 19: Real_Time (Google)
 Lenticular mounted on alu-dibon
 55 x 55 cm each (2 panels)
 2011 - 2012

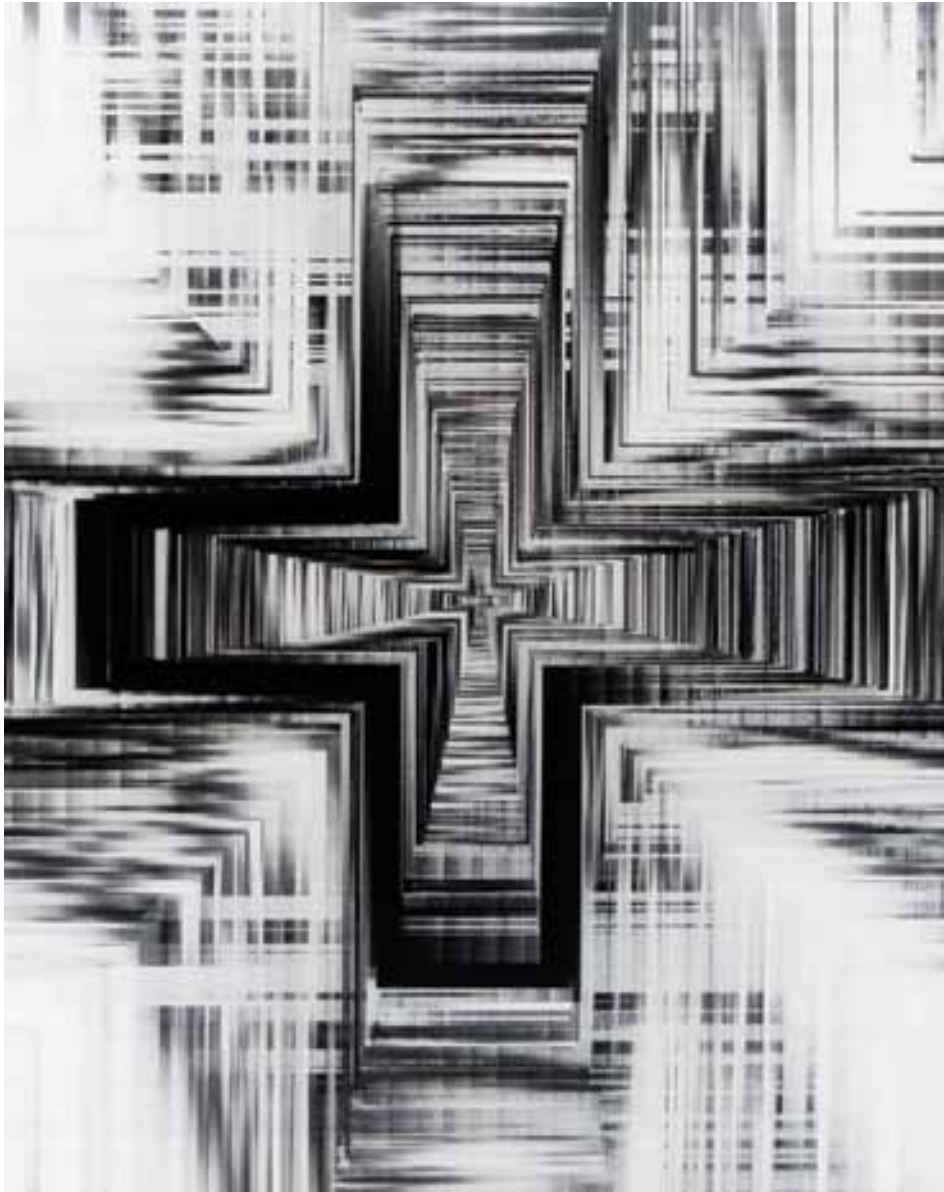


Plate 20: Eurasia_Xplosion (Cross/Ya)_W
Lenticular mounted on alu-dibon
55 x 70 cm
2012

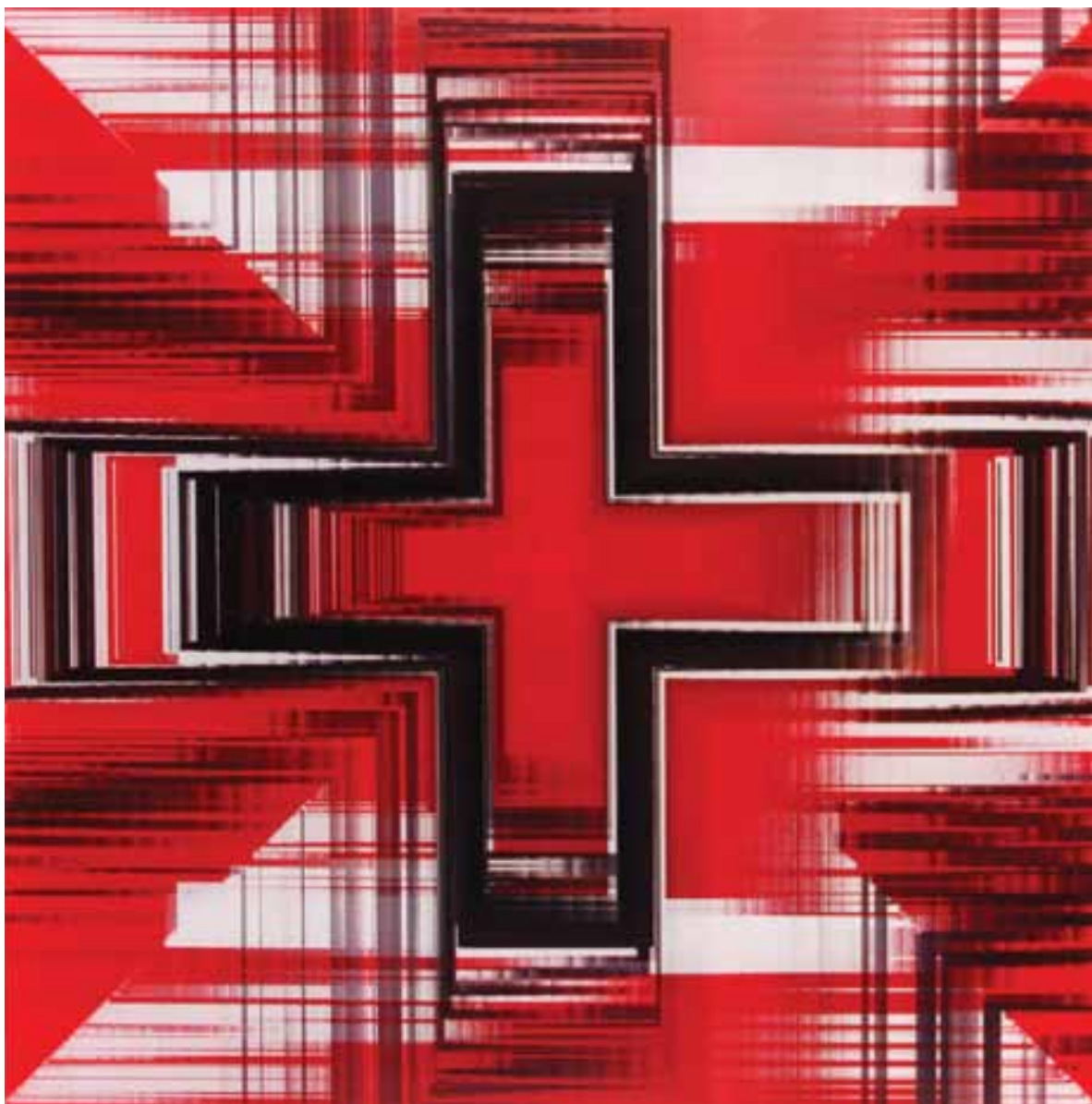


Plate 21: Eurasia_Xplosion (Cross/Ya)_R
Lenticular mounted on PMMA (Plexiglas)
75 x 75 cm
2012



Plate 22: The End(less), 1/3

Dual screen video installation

Video software: Claude Micheli

Edition 3 + 1 AP

Infinite duration (non-looping & non-linear image database play)

2012



Plate 23: Feeling, 1/3

Single screen video installation

Video software: Claude Micheli

Sound track from Disorder (Joy Division)

Edition 3 + 1 AP

Infinite duration (non-looping & non-linear image database play)

2012

BIOGRAPHY

Born in 1965

Lives and works in Paris, France

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2012** Eurasia, The Cat Street Gallery, Hong Kong - HK
Eurasia, TZR Galerie, Düsseldorf - DE
Extra_Vague, Galerie RX, Paris - FR
Le Musée en Herbe, Paris - FR
IBU Gallery, Paris - FR
- 2011** Gott ist Tot, Claudio Bottello Contemporary, Turin - IT
Pourquoi? What_Next? Nuit Blanche, Saint-Eustache, Paris - FR
- 2010** Text(e)~Fil(e)s, Palais-Royal, Paris - FR
IBU Gallery, Paris - FR EXCES I, Die Galerie, Seoul - KR
EXCES II, Seok Gallery, Daegu - KR
- 2009** Image-Flux, Galerie RX, Paris - FR
Time Spirals, The Cat Street Gallery, Hong Kong - HK
- 2008** Géométries Irrationnelles, Galerie municipale, Vitry-sur-Seine - FR
- 2007** BLINK, Artpool, Budapest - HU
RRB, Espace Orensa de Gaffory, Patrimonio - FR
- 2006** @tom1k, Hôtel Pams, Mairie de Perpignan, Perpignan - FR
- 2005** Château de Linardie, Senouillac - FR
SpamScape, Maison Populaire, Montreuil - FR
- 2004** Galerie Mabel Semmler, Paris - FR
Fort Napoléon, La Seyne-sur-Mer - FR
- 2002** Galerie Mabel Semmler, Paris - FR
- 2001** Galerie EOF, Paris - FR

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2012** Schrift und Bild, Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf - DE
Plaisir, Galerie RX, Paris - FR
Update_4 Biennial / New Technological Art Award, iMAL, Bruxelles - BE
Science Art 2: Non & Digital, The Central House of Artists, Moscow - RU
- 2011** HK Art Fair, The Cat Street Gallery, Hong Kong - HK
SOAF, The Page Gallery, Seoul - KR
Signal 8, The Cat Street Gallery, Hong Kong - HK
Hybrid Boy, TZR Galerie, Düsseldorf - DE
- 2010** Tou_R0se, Traverse, Centre Bellegarde, Toulouse - FR
Salon Dessin Contemporain, Galerie RX, Paris - FR
HK Art Fair, The Cat Street Gallery, Hong Kong - HK
New Era, Galerie RX, Paris - FR
Paratissima, Claudio Bottello Contemporary, Turin - IT
- 2009** HK Art Fair, The Cat Street Gallery, Hong Kong - HK
EcritureAbstraction, Galerie RX, Paris - FR
- 2008** Imaging by numbers, Block Museum, Chicago - USA
art.ficial 4.0, Instituto Itaú cultural, Sao Paulo - BR
Great wall of Oakland, Oakland - USA
Videoholica 08, Velchev Art Museum, Varna - BU
Summer show, The Cat Street Gallery, Hong Kong - HK
- 2007** Victory Media Network, Dallas - USA
Traverse, Centre Bellegarde, Toulouse - FR
Slought in Berlin, Galerie Heike Curtz, Berlin - DE
Slick, Galerie Numeriscausa, Paris - FR
- 2006** Almost Art, Slought Foundation, Philadelphia - USA
Process Revealed, Artpool, Budapest - HU
Trampoline, Broadway Media Centre, Nottingham - UK
- 2005** Espace Recherches / DesignLab, Salon du Meuble, Paris - FR
Nuit d'Art, Place Saint Sulpice, Paris - FR

- 2004** International Festival of Electronic Art 404, Rosario - AR
Plasticité, Galerie Mabel Semmler, Paris - FR
Canon Digital Creator, SVA Computer Art, New York - USA
- 2003** Spiral gallery, Canon Digital Creator Award, Tokyo - JP
- 2002** Espace Cardin, Paris - FR
- 2000** Le temps fractal, Galerie Xippas, Paris - FR
Universal Concepts Unlimited, New York - USA
- 1999** Fractalisations, Villa Tamaris, La Seyne-sur-Mer - FR
Habiter les réseaux, Galerie de l'école des Beaux-Arts, Metz - FR
Centre Culturel Français, Turin - IT Abbaye de Ronceray, Angers - FR
- 1997** Fractal Art, Espace Paul Ricard, Paris - FR
Palazzo Economo, Trieste - IT
Zoom, Visual Arts Gallery, Purchase College, New York - USA
Caos Vertiginoso, Galleria Cruce, Madrid - SP
- 1996** Microcosmos, University of Georgia, Athens - USA
Vous avez dit Fractal, Musée, Médiathèque, Le Parefeuille, Enclos de la Source, Uzès - FR
Modernita, Palazzo Bricherasio, Turin - IT
- 1995** Galerie Arx, Turin - IT
- 1994** Ars Electronica (Honorary Mention), Linz - AT
- 1988** Multi Media Art Gallery, New York - US

COLLECTIONS

Ville de Vitry-sur-Seine - FR
Musée des Beaux Arts, Szepmuveszeti Muzeum, Budapest - HU
Seiko Epson Corp. - JP
Canon Inc. - JP
Victory Arts Collection - USA
Block Museum, Chicago - USA
Fondazione Palazzo Bricherasio - IT



Clockwise from top left: *Sign_Xplosion (Atomic!)*, 2011, Lenticular mounted on PMMA (Plexiglas), 180 x 180 cm; *Eurasia*, 2012, TZR Galerie, Düsseldorf - DE, installation view; *Irrational Geometrics*, 2008, Galerie Municipale, Vitry sur seine - FR, video installation view; *Google_RKW_West/East (Blink)*, 2011, Claudio Bottello Contemporary, Turin - IT, video installation view.

[illegible]



Text(e)~Fil(e)s, 2010, Palais-Royal, Paris - FR
Site-specific floor print installation, 2520 x 130 cm

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The Cat Street Gallery

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Andreas Von Lintel (page 7, 45, 46, 47) and Luca Bottello (page 34, 45)

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Danielle Midalia at The Cat Street Gallery