ALLAN SEKULA

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American artist, writer and filmmaker, Allan Sekula (1951-2013) is a leading exemplar of socially probing art, photographic and cultural practice. Starting his career with actions and performance art during the era of protests against the U.S. war in S.E. Asia, his work then turned in the early 70's, towards a practice of social documentary while always questioning the limits of photography's capacity for clear and reliable communication. In his quest for a critical realism, Sekula sought to shed light on the profound ambiguity of current realities of social life, precariously balanced between objective conditions, hegemonic ideologies, and private fantasies. He focused mainly on showing the "performed" everyday life of all kinds of workers, spending his last years depicting the maritime culture of shipping and port labor as a forgotten space of late-capitalism.

Allan Sekula's work has been exhibited at Tapies Foundation (Barcelona), Beirut Art Center, MoMa (New York), Documenta (Kassel), Whitney Biennial (New York), Sao Paulo Biennial, Taipei Biennial, Centre Georges-Pompidou (Paris), Whitney Museum (New York), Hirschhorn Museum (Washington), New Museum of Contemporary Art (New York), Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto), Winnipeg Art Gallery (Vancouver), The Barbican Centre (London), La Virreina - Centre de la Imatge (Barcelona), MACBA (Barcelona), Generali Foundation (Vienna), Foto Institute (Rotterdam), Akbank Sanat (Istanbul).

His work is part of prestigious collections as Centre Georges-Pompidou (Paris), Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris, CNAP - Centre National des Art Plastiques (Paris), FNAC - Fonds National d'Art Contemporain (Paris), IAC - Institut d'Art Contemporain (Villeurbane), MACBA (Barcelona), Museo de Arte Reina Sofia (Madrid), FRAC: Grand Large - Hauts-de-France / Normandie Caen / Franche-Comté / Bretagne / Normandie Rouen, FMAC - Fond Municipal d'Art Contemporain, MoMa (New York), Whitney Museum (New York), Tate Modern (London), MOCA - Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles), Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam), M HKA (Antwerp), Zacheta National Gallery of Art (Warsaw), Johann Jacobs Museum (Zürich), Generali Foundation (Vienna), TBA21 collection - Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary (Vienna), SFMOMA (San Francisco), Fotomuseum Winterthur, Wroclaw Contemporary Museum, MUSAC - Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León, Museum Folkwang (Essen), Ludwig Museum (Budapest), MCASD - Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, among others.

Artiste, écrivain et cinéaste américain, Allan Sekula (1951-2013) est, à travers l'ensemble de ses pratiques, un représentant de premier plan d'un art socialement engagé. Débutant sa carrière par l'action et la performance à l'époque des mouvements de protestations contre la guerre américaine en Asie du Sud-Est, Allan Sekula s'est ensuite tourné, au début des années 70, vers une pratique du documentaire social en questionnant de façon permanente les limites du médium photographique comme outil de communication clair et fiable. Dans sa quête d'un réalisme critique, Allan Sekula a cherché à mettre en lumière la profonde ambiguïté des conditions actuelles de la vie sociale, en équilibre perpétuel et précaire entre les conditions objectives, les idéologies hégémoniques et les imaginaires personnels. Il s'est surtout attaché à montrer la vie quotidienne « performée » de différentes catégories de travailleurs, passant ses dernières années à dépeindre le monde du transport maritime et le travail portuaire comme l'espace oublié du capitalisme tardif.

Le travail d'Allan Sekula a été exposé à la Tapies Foundation (Barcelone), au Beirut Art Center, MoMa (New York), Documenta (Kassel), Whitney Biennial (New York), Sao Paulo Biennial, Taipei Biennial, Centre Georges-Pompidou (Paris), Whitney Museum (New York), Hirschhorn Museum (Washington), New Museum of Contemporary Art (New York), Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto), Winnipeg Art Gallery (Vancouver), The Barbican Centre (Londres), La Virreina - Centre de la Image (Barcelone), MACBA (Barcelone), Generali Foundation (Vienne), Foto Institute (Rotterdam), Akbank Sanat (Istanbul) etc.

Ses œuvres font parties de collections prestigieuses telles que le Centre Georges-Pompidou (Paris), le Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris, le CNAP - Centre National des Art Plastiques (Paris), le FNAC - Fonds National d'Art Contemporain (Paris), IAC - Institut d'Art Contemporain (Villeurbane), MACBA (Barcelone), Museo de Arte Reina Sofia (Madrid), FRAC : Grand Large - Hauts-de-France / Normandie Caen / Franche-Comté / Bretagne / Normandie Rouen, FMAC - Fond Municipal d'Art Contemporain, MoMa (New York), Whitney Museum (New York), Tate Modern (Londres), MOCA - Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles), Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam), M HKA (Anvers), Zacheta National Gallery of Art (Varsovie), Johann Jacobs Museum (Zurich), Generali Foundation (Vienne), collection TBA21 - Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary (Vienne), SFMOMA (San Francisco), Fotomuseum Winterthur, Wroclaw Contemporary Museum, MUSAC - Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León, Museum Folkwang (Essen), Ludwig Museum (Budapest), MCASD - Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, entre autres.





Michel Rein, *Art Isn't Fair,* Paris, France, 2019





Michel Rein, *Art Isn't Fair,* Paris, France, 2019



Michel Rein, *Art Isn't Fair,* Paris, France, 2019



Documenta XIV, installation view *ANTIDORON. The EMST Collection,* Fridericianum, Kassel, 2017



Documenta XIV, School of Fine Arts, Pireos Street, Athens, Greece, 2017





Fundacio Antoni Tapies, *Allan Sekula. Collective Sisyphus*, (cur. Carles Guerra) Barcelona, Spain, 2017





Fundacio Antoni Tapies, *Allan Sekula. Collective Sisyphus*, (cur. Carles Guerra) Barcelona, Spain, 2017



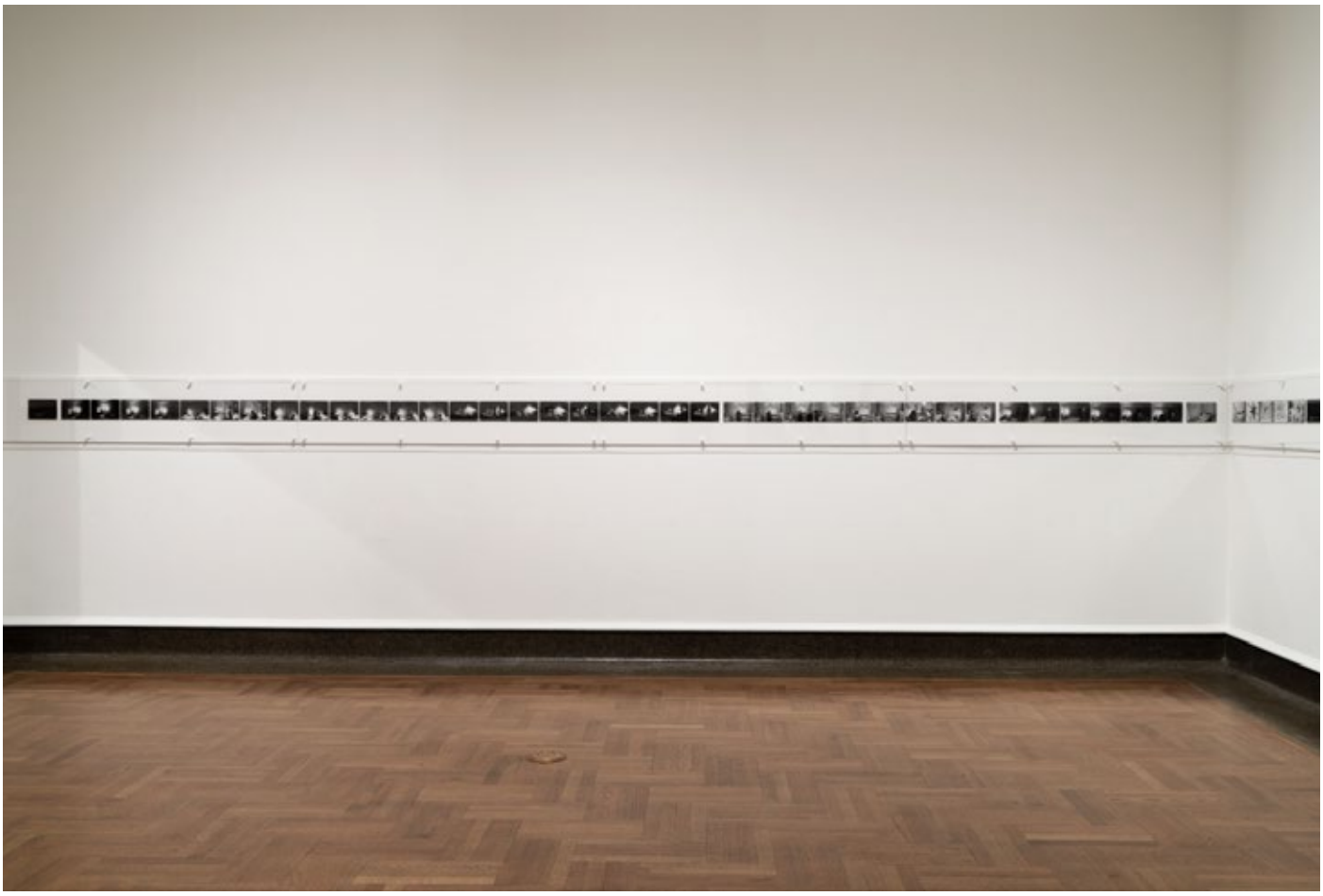


Beirut Art Center, *Allan Sekula: Photography at Work*, (cur. Marie Muracciole) Turkey, 2017





Beirut Art Center, *Allan Sekula: Photography at Work*, (cur. Marie Muracciole) Turkey, 2017





Columbus Museum of Art, *Allan Sekula: Aerospace Folktales and Other Stories*, Columbus, USA, 2017





MoMA, *Scenes for a New Heritage: Contemporary Art from the Collection,* New York, USA, 2015





Hoffman Gallery, Lewis and Clark College, *Reinventing Documentary: The Art of Allan Sekula*, Portland, USA, 2015



Michel Rein, *Photographic works from the 70's*, Paris, France, 2014





Centre Georges-Pompidou, *Lottery of the Sea and A Short Film for Laos*, Paris, France, 2013





MoMA, 19 New Acquisitions in Photography, New York, USA, 2013





Akbank Art Center, Ali Akay, *Allan Sekula: Disassembled Movies 1972 - 2012*, (cur. Marie Muracciole & Ali Akay) Istanbul, Turkey, 2012





MACBA, *Critical Episodes (1957-2011)*, Barcelona, 2012





La Criée - Centre d'Art Contemporain, *Allan Sekula: The Dockers Museum*, (cur. Jürgen Bock) Rennes, France, 2012



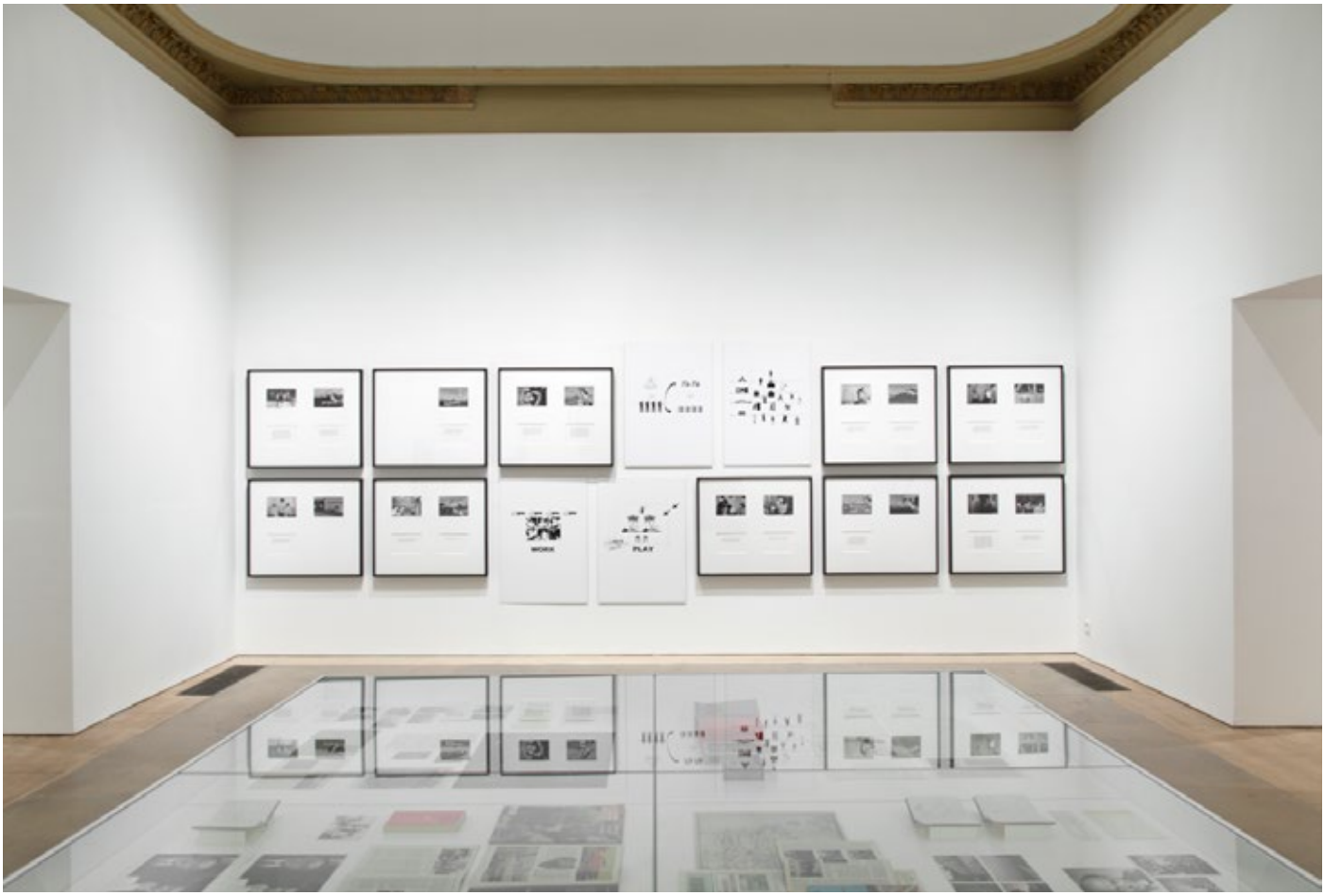


Michel Rein, *Californian Sequences*, Paris, France, 2012



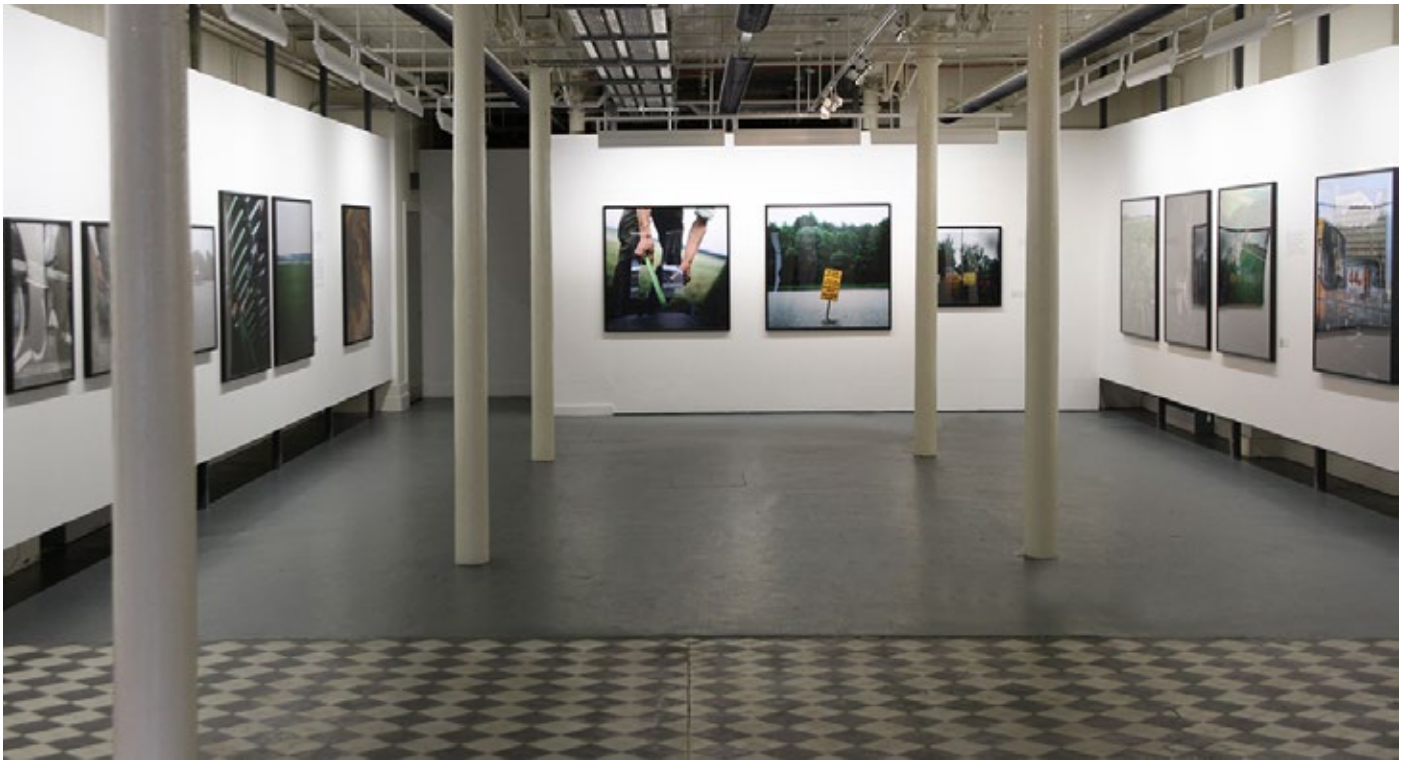


La Virreina - Centre de la Imatge, *Retrospective of Allan Sekula's films*, Loop Festival, Barcelona, 2011





Centre de l'Image, Palau de la Virreina, *Retrospective of Allan Sekula's films*, Loop Festival, Barcelona, 2011





Nederlands Fotomuseum, *Angry, Young and Radical*, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 2011





Michel Rein, *Polonia and...*, Paris, France, 2011





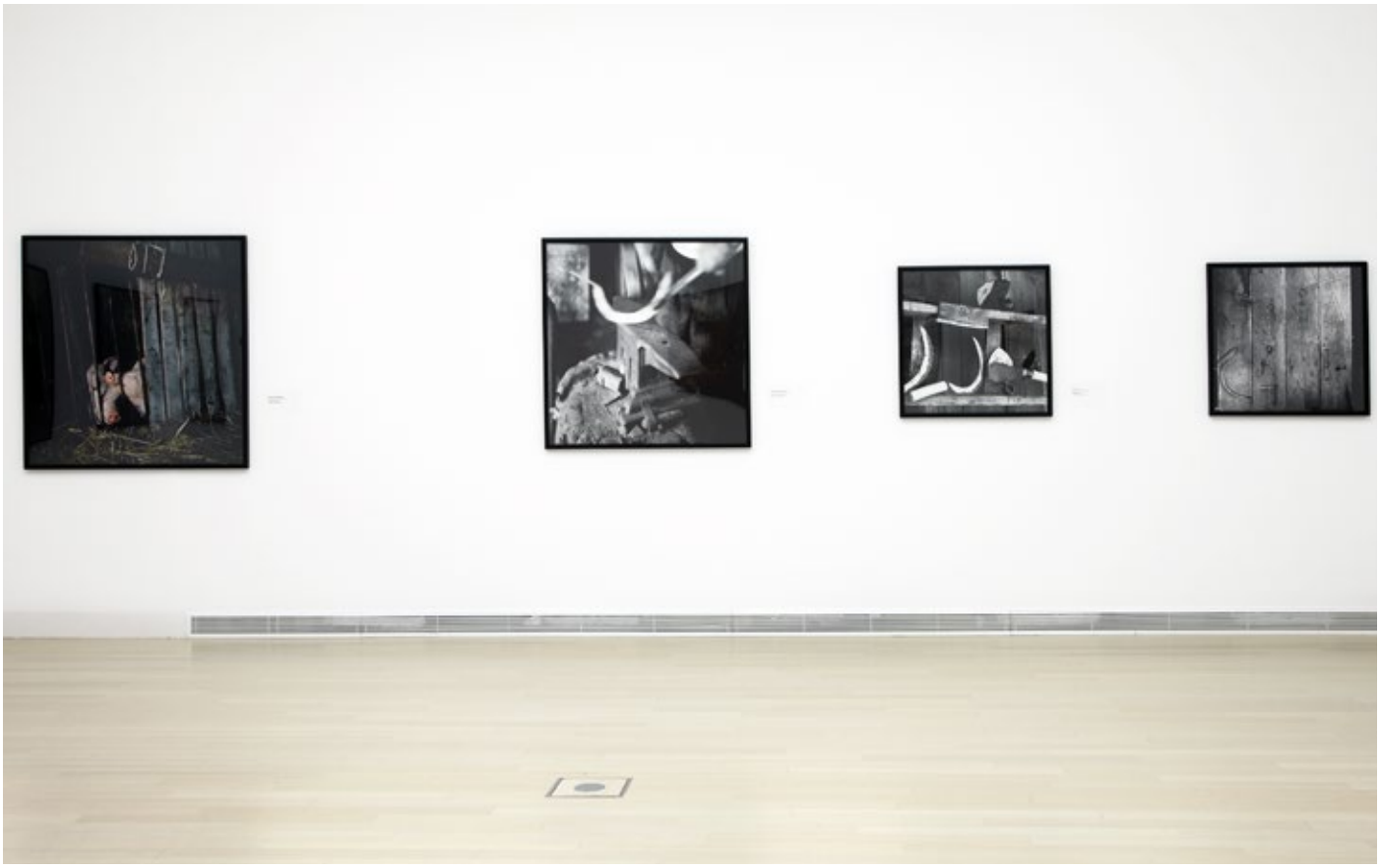
Michel Rein, *Polonia and...*, Paris, France, 2011





Dutch Culture center, *Act VIII : Nether Land*, Shanghai, 2010





Ludwig Museum, *Polonia and Other Fables*, Budapest, Hungary, 2010



Ludwig Museum, *Allan Sekula: Polonia and Other Fables*, Budapest, Hungary, 2010



e-flux, *Allan Sekula : This Ain't China*, New York, USA, 2010





MUHKA, *Ship of Fools, Extra Muros : Allan Sekula*, Antwerpen, Belgium, 2010



Zacheta Gallery, *Allan Sekula: Retrospective*, Warsaw, Poland, 2009





University of Chicago, *Allan Sekula: Polonia and Other Fables, Renaissance Society*, USA, 2008



Michel Rein, *Travailler plus pour gagner plus*, Paris, France, 2008



Michel Rein, *Travailler plus pour gagner plus*, Paris, France, 2008





Documenta XII, Kassel, Germany, 2007





Michel Rein, *Prayer for the Americans*, Paris, France, 2004

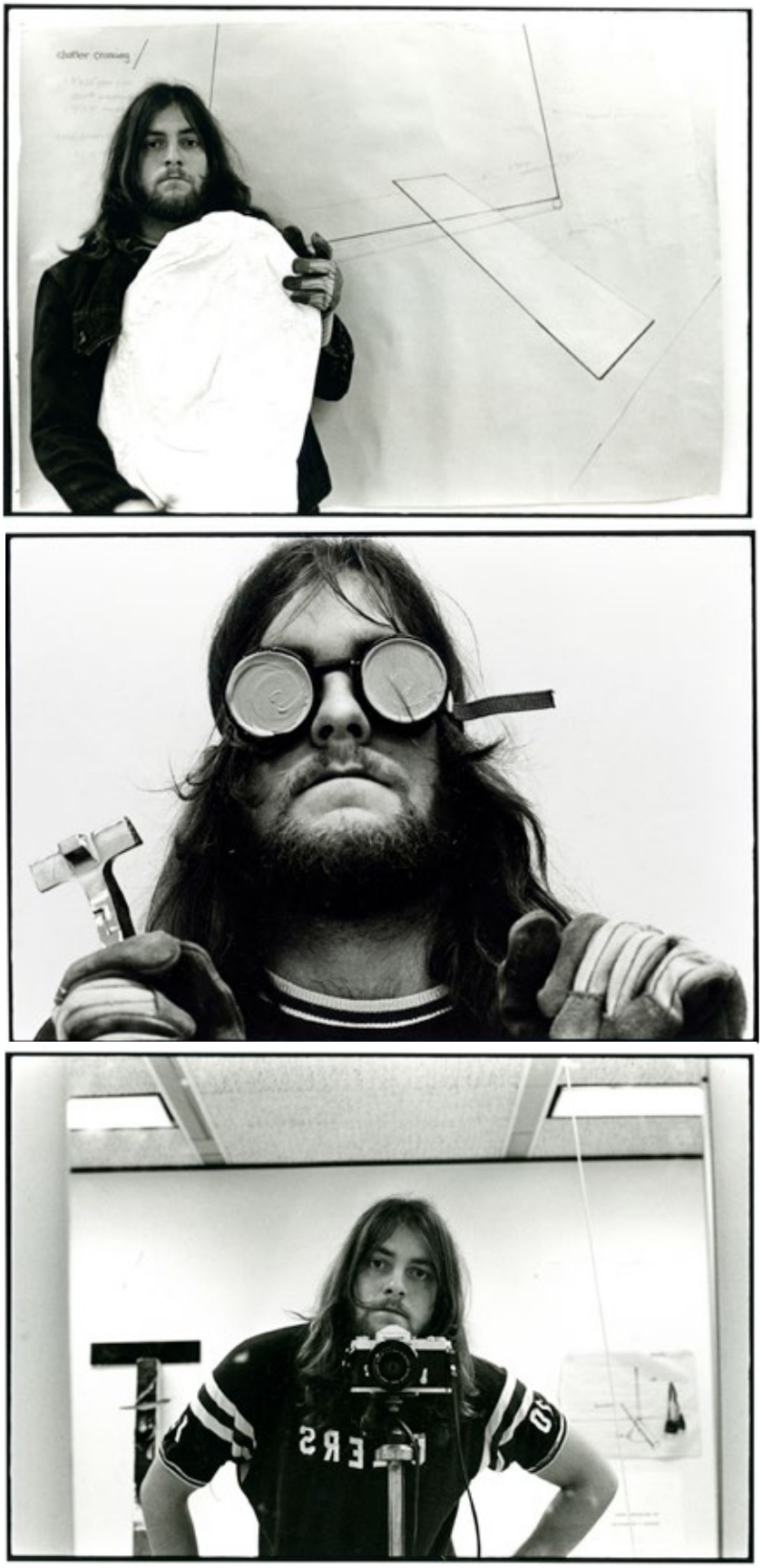


Generali Foundation, *Performance under Working Conditions*, Vienna, Austria, 2003





Michel Rein, *Titanic's wake*, Paris, France, 2001



Self portrait as Sculptor/Painter/Photographer, 1972
three black & white photographs in a single wooden frame, plexiglas
trois photographies noir et blanc sous un seul cadre en bois, plexiglas
80 x 55 cm (31.5 x 21.7 in.)
unique artwork
collection Museum Folkwang, Essen (Germany)

UNTITLED SLIDE SEQUENCE
1972

Workers leaving the factory at the end of a day shift; General Dynamics, Convair Division aerospace factory, San Diego, California, (17 February 1972), 1972.

Untitled Slide Sequence was photographed at the end of the day shift at General Dynamics Convair Division aerospace plant in San Diego, California on 17 February 1972. At the time factory produced Atlas and Centaur rockets.

I stood at the top of the stairs leading to the company parking lot on the other side of Pacific Highway (the old route 101) and used a borrowed camera to make a «motion study» of workers and managers heading home at the end of the workday. The idea was to show the social context, and not the abstracted and individuated action visible in the photograohic sequences produced at the end of the 19th century by Muybridge and Marey. My trespass lasted until i was spotted by the company guards and ejected from the property. Fortunately my film was not confiscated, especially cince photography was prohibited for national security reasons.

The original exposures were made on slow-speed black and white negative film that was reversed in processing to yield a positive transparency. The only way to show this work was to produced duplicate slides by the same method, and this has been the way the work was presented: a darkened room, slides projected at ten second intervals at a scal of roughly six by nine feet. The pictures were more or less «life size» but fleeting and inviting visual memory to track the progress of tired employees as they head to their automobiles and homes.

It was never possible to make good black and white prints from positive monochrome film until recently. (One needed to make an internegative or else print on color -Cibachrome- material, and these results were never satisfying.) But conditions have changed and it occured to me that a sequence of prints would allow the viewer to move back and forth, «rewinding» the flow of human movement and picking iout detailq that go missing in ten seconds. Thus this translation of an older project.

Allan Sekula

Travailleurs quittant l'usine à la fin de leur journée de travail ; General Dynamics, Convair Division aerospace factory, San Diego, California, (17 février 1972), 1972.

Untitled Slide Sequence a été photographié à la fin d'une journée de travail de l'usine aérospatiale de General Dynamics Convair Division à San Diego, Californie, dans la nuit du 17 février 1972. A l'époque, l'usine produisait des fusées Atlas et Centaur.

Je me tenais en haut de l'escalier menant au stationnement de la compagnie de l'autre côté de l'autoroute du Pacifique (l'ancienne route 101) et j'ai utilisé une caméra empruntée pour faire une «étude de mouvement» des travailleurs et des gestionnaires qui rentraient chez eux à la fin de leur journée de travail. L'idée était de montrer le contexte social, et non l'action abstraite et individualisée visible dans les séquences photographiques produites à la fin du XIXe siècle par Muybridge et Marey. Mon intrusion a duré jusqu'à ce que je sois repéré par les gardes de la compagnie et éjecté de la propriété. Heureusement, mon film n'a pas été confisqué, surtout parce que la photographie était interdite pour des raisons de sécurité nationale.

Les photographies originales ont été réalisées sur un film négatif noir et blanc à basse vitesse qui a été inversé lors du traitement pour donner une transparence positive. La seule façon de montrer ce travail était de produire des diapositives en double avec la même méthode, et c'est ainsi que le travail a été présenté : une salle obscurcie, des diapositives projetées à intervalles de dix secondes à une échelle d'environ six pieds sur neuf. Les images étaient plus ou moins «grandeur nature» mais fugitives tout en invitant le spectateur à suivre les progrès des employés fatigués alors qu'ils se dirigeaient vers leur automobile pour rejoindre leur domicile.

Jusqu'à récemment, il n'était jamais possible de faire de bons tirages en noir et blanc à partir d'un film monochrome positif. (Il fallait faire un internégatif ou bien imprimer en couleur -cibachrome- et ces résultats n'ont jamais été satisfaisants). Mais les conditions ont changé et il m'est venu à l'esprit qu'une séquence d'impressions qui permettrait au spectateur d'aller et venir, de «rembobiner» le flux du mouvement humain et de choisir les détails qui manquent en dix secondes. D'où cette traduction d'un projet plus ancien.

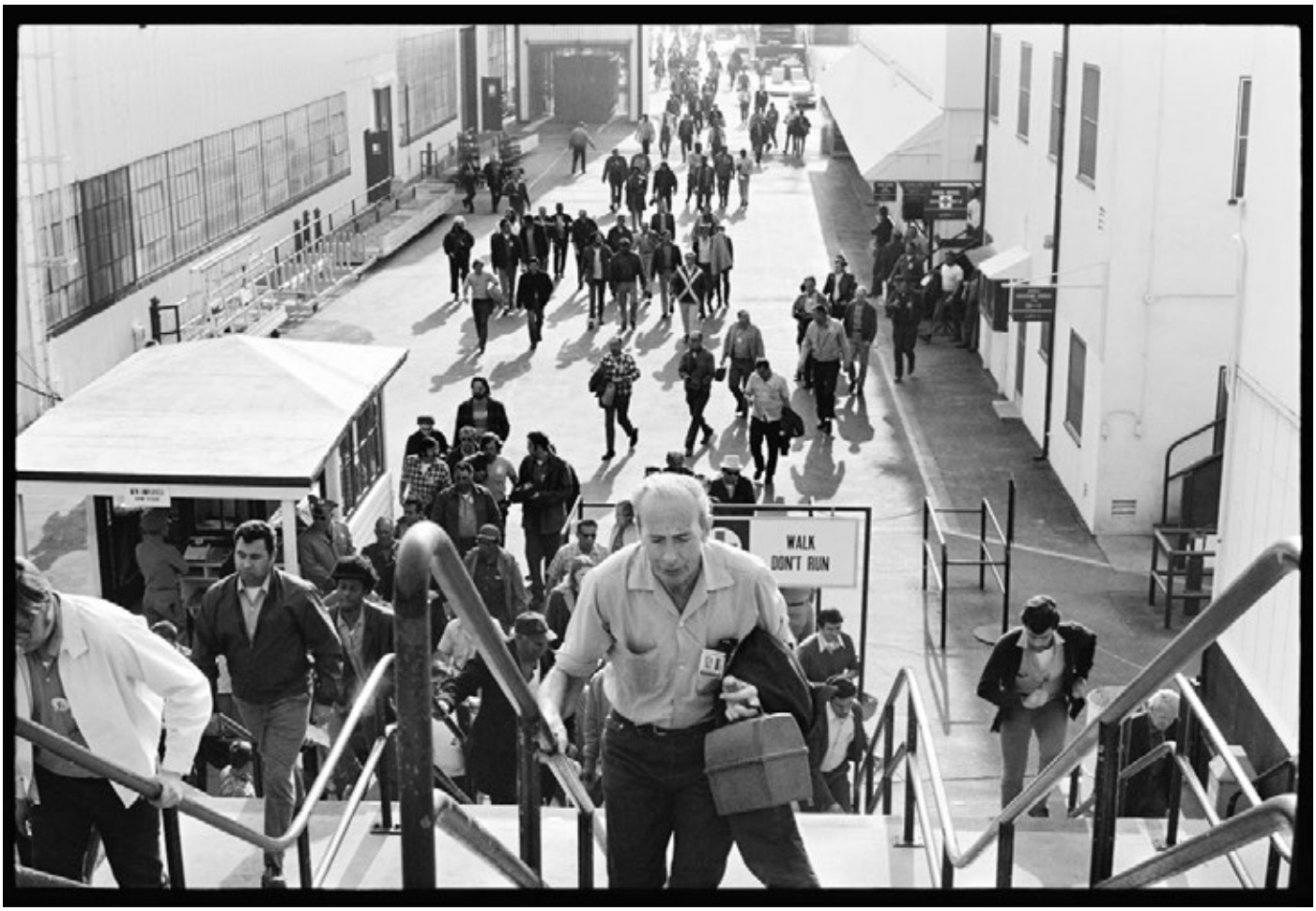
Allan Sekula



Untitled Slide Sequence, 1972/2011
25 black and white photographs, 25 wooden frames, plexiglas
25 photographies noir et blanc, 25 cadres bois, plexiglas
each frame: 359 x 51,9 cm (13.78 x 20.08 in.)
ed. 5 ex + 2 AP
SEKU11121

collections:

- Tate Modern, London (UK)
- MoMA, New York (USA)
- Instituto Cultural Inhotim, Brumadinho (Brazil)
- Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (Netherlands)
- MACSD - Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (USA)
- Ludwig museum, Cologne (Germany)


WALK
DON'T RUN







CALIFORNIA STORIES
1973-1975

California Stories is more a matter of completion than translation. Both before leaving California for New York in 1974 and after returning the next year, I planned and photographed a nulber of smaller sequential projects, often involving some sort of staging, either deadpan or comic. These were never printed. the works fall between my works from earlier 70ˢ, such as *Aerospace Folktales* and project from the late 70ˢ, such as *School Is a Factory*. [...]

So what I was experimenting with as an alternative was a way of suggesting that social topograohy was invitably the site of strife, class war, land-grabs, ethnic-cleansing, repression and empire. This is especially true in California, where the bones of the first inhabitants crunch underfoot with every step

Allan Sekula

California Stories est plus une question d'achèvement que de traduction. Avant de quitter la Californie pour New York en 1974 et après mon retour l'année suivante, j'ai planifié et photographié une série de petits projets séquentiels, impliquant souvent une sorte de mise en scène, soit inexpressible, soit comique. Celles-ci n'ont jamais été produites. Les photographies se situent entre mes œuvres du début des années 70, comme *Aerospace Folktales*, et des projets de la fin des années 70, comme *School Is a Factory*. [...]

Ce que j'expérimentais donc comme alternative, c'était une façon de suggérer que la topographie sociale était invariablement le lieu de conflits, de guerres de classes, d'accaparement de terres, de nettoyage ethnique, de répression et d'empire. C'est particulièrement vrai en Californie, où les os des premiers habitants craquent sous les pieds à chaque pas.

Allan Sekula



Attempt to correlate social class with elevation above main harbor channel (San Pedro, July 1975), 1975/2011
California Stories series 1973-1975
ensemble of 6 archival pigment prints, passe partout, 1 wooden frame, plexiglas
ensemble de 6 impressions pigmentaires, passe-partout, 1 cadre bois, plexiglas
103 x 103 x 4 cm (40.55 x 40.55 x 1.57 in.)
ed. 5 ex + 1 AP
SEKU12123

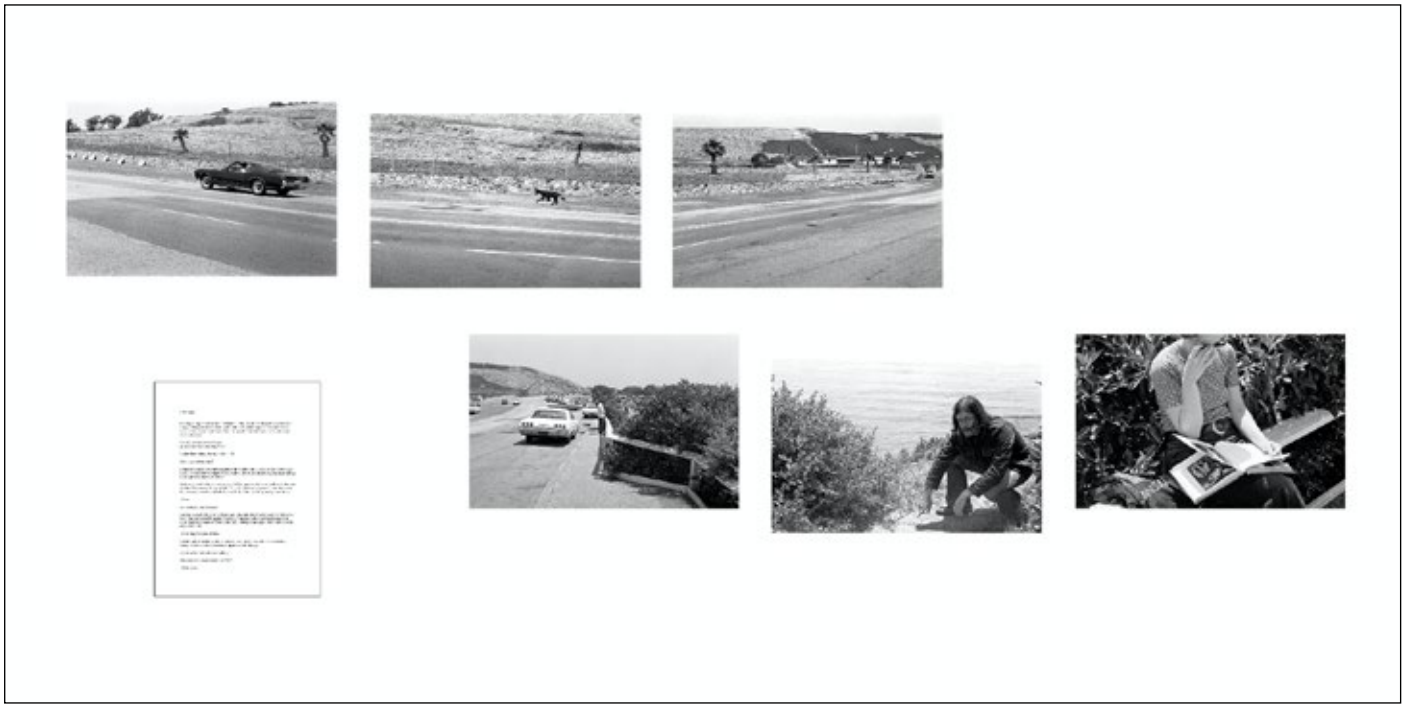
collections:
- Kadist foundation, San Francisco (USA)
- Private collection (USA)



Red Squad (San Diego, 20 January 1973), 1973/2011
California Stories series 1973-1975
ensemble of 6 archival pigment prints, passe partout, 1 wooden frame, plexiglas
ensemble de 6 impressions pigmentaires sur papier archive, 1 passe-partout, cadre bois, plexiglas
93 x 184 x 4 cm (36.61 x 72.44 x 1.57 in.)
ed. 5 ex + 1 AP
SEKU13002



Vietnamese Village (San Pedro, July 1975), 1975/2011
California Stories series 1973-1975
ensemble of 5 archival pigment prints, passe partout, wooden frame, plexiglas
ensemble de 5 impressions pigmentaires sur papier archive, passe-partout, cadre bois, plexiglas
93,5 x 184 x 4 cm (36.61 x 72.44 x 1.57 in.)
ed. 5 ex + 1 AP
Ludwig Museum collection, Budapest (Hungary)
SEKU11082



Cliffhanger (San Pedro, July 1975), 1975
California Stories 1973-1975 series
ensemble of 6 archival pigment prints, text, passe partout, wooden frame, plexiglas
ensemble de 6 tirages pigments sur papier archive, texte, passe-partout, cadre bois, plexiglas
93,5 x 184 x 4 cm (36.61 x 72.44 x 1.57 in.)
ed. of 5 + 1 AP
Ludwig Museum collection, Budapest (Hungary)
SEKU12122

DEAR BILL GATES
1999

In this work *Dear Bill Gates* the artist documents having swam within spitting distance of the private lake-side house of Bill Gates, the Microsoft founder and owner of the Corbis photo agency at the time. In the open letter, written on a typewriter, Sekula comments on Gates' 30-million-dollar purchase of a painting by Winslow Homer, depicting two doomed fishermen lost at sea (*Lost on the Grand Banks*, 1885). The painting, although hung in the private residence of the billionaire, could not be found anywhere on the net.

Sekula here undoes Bill Gates' status as a pioneer of the paradigm of the global archivist, and shows that Gates in fact sought to control the streams of images through their digital reproduction. Contrary to the promise of it's being «the archive of everything for everybody» Gates forced the traffic in images to wear a licensing corset, and so ultimately declared it as private property.

Dans l'œuvre *Dear Bill Gates*, 1999, Allan Sekula documente l'action d'avoir nagé à proximité de la maison privée de Bill Gates, le fondateur de Microsoft et propriétaire de l'agence photo Corbis à l'époque. Dans la lettre ouverte, écrite à la machine à écrire, Sekula commente l'achat par Gates, pour 30 millions de dollars, d'un tableau de Winslow Homer représentant deux pêcheurs perdus en mer (*Lost on the Grand Banks*, 1885). Le tableau, bien qu'accroché dans la résidence privée du milliardaire, n'a pu être trouvé nulle part sur le net.

Sekula défait ici le statut de Bill Gates en tant que pionnier du paradigme de l'archiviste mondial, et montre que Gates a en fait cherché à contrôler les flux d'images par leur reproduction numérique. Contrairement à la promesse d'être «l'archive de tout pour tous», Gates a forcé le trafic d'images à porter un corset de licence, et l'a finalement déclaré propriété privée.





Dear Bill Gates, 1999
two elements : cibachrome print triptych, typewritten letter, two wooden frames, plexiglass
deux éléments : triptyque photographique, lettre tapuscrite, deux cadres bois, plexiglass
photo: 71 x 262 cm (27.95 x 103.15 in.)
letter: 31 x 25 cm (12.2 x 9.84 in.)
ed. of 5 ex + 1 AP
SEKU12123

collections:
- SF MoMA, San Francisco (USA)
- Martin Margulies, Miami (USA)
- Collection Neuflize Vie / ABM AMRO
- private collections







November 30, 1999

Dear Bill Gates,

I swam past your dream house the other day, but didn't stop to knock. Frankly, your underwater sensors had me worried. I would have liked to take a look at Winslow Homer's Lost on the Grand Banks. It's a great painting, but, speaking as a friend and fellow citizen, at $30 million you paid too much.

HIGHEST PRICE EVER PAID FOR AN AMERICAN PAINTING!!!

So why are you so interested in a picture of two poor lost dory fishermen, momentarily high on a swell, peering into a wall of fog? They're about as high as they're ever going to be, unless the sea gets uglier. They are going to die you know, and it won't be a pretty death.

And as for you Bill, when you're on the net, are you lost? Or found?

And the rest of us--lost or found--are we on it, or in it?

Your friend

FISH STORIE
1989-1995

Completed between 1989 and 1995, *Fish Story* saw Allan Sekula's career-long pursuit of a contemporary 'critical realism' reach its most complex articulation. *Fish Story* reconstructed a realist model of photographic representation, while taking a critical stance towards traditional documentary photography. It also marked Sekula's first sustained exploration of the ocean as a key space of globalisation. A key issue in *Fish Story* is the connection between containerized cargo movement and the growing internationalization of the world industrial economy, with its effects on the actual social space of ports.

The ambition of *Fish Story* lies both in its immense complexity and global scope and in its emphatic challenge to the dominant climate of postmodern theory and practice of the late 1980s and early 1990s. *Fish Story* occupies a pivotal place in a gradual shift, still nascent in the early 1990s, from a widespread culture of resignation and cynicism to one of renewed radical engagement in the art world.

Achevé entre 1989 et 1995, *Fish Story* a vu Allan Sekula poursuivre tout au long de sa carrière la quête d'un «réalisme critique» contemporain dans son articulation la plus complexe. *Fish Story* a reconstruit un modèle réaliste de représentation photographique, tout en prenant une position critique envers la photographie documentaire traditionnelle. Elle a également marqué l'exploration soutenue de l'océan comme un espace clé de la mondialisation par Sekula. Une question clé dans *Fish Story* est le lien entre le mouvement des marchandises conteneurisées et l'internationalisation croissante de l'économie industrielle mondiale, avec ses effets sur l'espace social réel des ports.

L'ambition de *Fish Story* réside à la fois dans son immense complexité, sa portée mondiale et dans sa remise en question énergique du climat théorique dominant et de la pratique postmodernes de la fin des années 1980 début des années 1990. *Fish Story* occupe une place centrale dans une évolution progressive, encore naissante au début des années 1990, d'une culture généralisée de résignation et de cynisme à une culture d'engagement radical renouvelé dans le monde de l'art.



Koreatown, Los Angeles, 1992
Fish Story Special Edition series
cibachrome print mounted on aluminium, wooden frame, plexiglas
tirage cibachrome contrecollée sur aluminium, cadre bois, plexiglas
103 x 73 x 6 cm (40.55 x 28.74 x 2.36 in.)
ed. 5 ex + 1 AP
SEKU08008

collections:

- Helga de Alvear foundation, Madrid (Spain)
- Private collection (USA)



Bo'sun Driving the Forward Winch, 1989-1995
Fish Story series
cibachrome print mounted on aluminium, wooden frame, plexiglas
tirage cibachrome contrecollée sur aluminium, cadre bois, plexiglas
66,4 x 168,9 x 6,3 cm (25.98 x 66.14 x 2.36 in.)
SEKU08006

collections:

- Johann Jacobs Museum, Zürich (Switzerland)
- Private collection



Dockers unloading shipload of frozen fish from Argentina, 1989-1995
Fish Story series
cibachrome print mounted on aluminium, wooden frame, plexiglas
tirage cibachrome contrecollée sur aluminium, cadre bois, plexiglas
45,4 x 63,5 x 3,2 cm (17.72 x 24.8 x 1.18 in.)

DEAD LETTER OFFICE
1996-1997

This project was commissioned for the «InSite 97» exhibition, then presented in the fall of 1997 in the border cities of San Diego (California) and Tijuana (Baja California).

« Here the metropolitan first world and the metropolitanthird world meet, in a tense North American version of apartheid.My photographs [were] exhibited on the Mexican side of the line, and constitute a sequel of sorts to *Fish Story*, particularlyto the chapter on Veracruz. It is worth noting that Tijuana is now a major site for the production of cargo containers, a largefactory having been built in the industrial district of El Florido by the Korean conglomerate Hyundai following the closure ofa smaller factory in the port of Los Angeles.The written elements of the work may share certain features with science fiction writing or speculative military fiction, suchas the novels of Tom Clancy.

I am also interested in several novels, travel books, and films about San Diego and Baja California, particularly in the writer Max Miller, whose early 1930's novel *I Cover the Waterfront* was made into a hit filmshortly after its publication. Throughout his writing, Miller evokes an earlier metaphysic of the California coast as terra nova, a metaphysic found, for example, in the 1840s writings of Richard Henry Dana. But for Miller, whose racial views are a bigstep backward from Dana's, the maritime space of Baja California is a repository of a primeval past that has been lostabove the border. One can chart linkages between Miller's texts and certain B-movies about the California coast as a spaceof melancholic beach-bum indolence on the verge of Cold War geopolitical intrigue, notably Shack out on 101. Those who identify, consciously or not, with the white adventurers who seized the northern part of California from theMexicans in the 1840's continue to regard the long peninsula of Baja California as a kind of vestigal organ, a primeval, reptilian tail: as a place of escape, drunkenness and dreams. The truth at the end of the twentieth century may be closer tothis: the industrialized northern border of Mexico offers an image of a grim Taylorist future. Thus the hand of the slave axtends a fun - house mirror to the Janus-face of the pleasure and profit - seeking master. »

Allan Sekula

Ce projet a été commandé pour l'exposition «InSite 97», puis présenté à l'automne 1997 dans les villes frontalières de San Diego (Californie) et de Tijuana (Basse Californie).

« Mes photographies [ont été] exposées du côté mexicain de la ligne, et constituent une sorte de suite à *Fish Story*, en particulier au chapitre sur Veracruz. Il est à noter que Tijuana est aujourd'hui un site majeur pour la production de conteneurs de fret, une grande usine ayant été construite dans le district industriel d'El Florido par le conglomérat coréen Hyundai suite à la fermeture d'une usine plus petite dans le port de Los Angeles, dont les éléments écrits peuvent partager certaines caractéristiques avec des ouvrages de science fiction ou de fiction militaire spéculative, comme les romans de Tom Clancy.

Je m'intéresse aussi à plusieurs romans, livres de voyage et films sur San Diego et Baja California, en particulier à l'écrivain Max Miller, dont le roman *I Cover the Waterfront*, publié au début des années 1930, est devenu un film à succès peu après sa publication. Tout au long de ses écrits, Miller évoque une métaphysique antérieure de la côte californienne sous le nom de terra nova, une métaphysique trouvée, par exemple, dans les écrits de Richard Henry Dana dans les années 1840. Mais pour Miller, dont les opinions raciales sont un grand pas en arrière par rapport à celles de Dana, l'espace maritime de la Basse-Californie est le dépositaire d'un passé primitif qui a été perdu au-dessus de la frontière. On peut cartographier les liens entre les textes de Miller et certains films de série B sur la côte californienne comme un espace d'indolence mélancolique au bord de l'intrigue géopolitique de la guerre froide, notamment Shack out on 101. Ceux qui s'identifient, consciemment ou non, aux aventuriers blancs qui, dans les années 1840, se sont emparés de la partie nord de la Californie aux mains des Mexicains, continuent de considérer la longue péninsule de la Basse Californie comme une sorte d'organe vestigal, une queue reptilienne vierge : comme un lieu d'évasion, d'ivresse et de rêves. La vérité à la fin du XX^{e} siècle est peut-être plus proche : la frontière nord industrialisée du Mexique offre l'image d'un sombre avenir tayloriste. Ainsi la main de l'esclave étend un miroir de la maison de plaisir au visage de Janus du maître du plaisir et de l'appât du gain.»

Allan Sekula



Carnival Cruise Lines ship departing Ensenada for Los Angeles, 1996-1997
Dead Letter Office series
cibachrome print mounted on aluminium, wooden frame, plexiglas
tirage cibachrome contrecollée sur aluminium, cadre bois, plexiglas
62,9 x 167,6 x 6,3 cm (24.41 x 65.75 x 2.36 in.)



Throwing a line, Ensenada, 1996-1997
Dead Letter Office series
cibachrome print mounted on aluminium, wooden frame, plexiglas
tirage cibachrome contrecollée sur aluminium, cadre bois, plexiglas
62,9 x 167,6 x 6,3 cm (24.41 x 65.75 x 2.36 in.)



Navy photographer and marines participating in amphibious landing exercise, Camp Pendleton, 1996-1997
Dead Letter Office series
cibachrome print mounted on aluminium, wooden frame, plexiglas
tirage cibachrome contrecollée sur aluminium, cadre bois, plexiglas
62,9 x 167,6 x 6,3 cm (24.41 x 65.75 x 2.36 in.)



Metal-workers employed by a Hyundai subcontractor signing authorization papers for an independent union, Tijuana, 1996-1997
Dead Letter Office series
cibachrome print mounted on aluminium, wooden frame, plexiglas
tirage cibachrome contrecollée sur aluminium, cadre bois, plexiglas
69,8 x 97,5 x 6,3 cm (27.17 x 38.19 x 2.36 in.)



Shipyard welder cutting steel for Hyundai truck chassis, Ensenada, 1996-1997
Dead Letter Office series
cibachrome print mounted on aluminium, wooden frame, plexiglas
tirage cibachrome contrecollée sur aluminium, cadre bois, plexiglas
69,8 x 97,5 x 6,3 cm (27.17 x 38.19 x 2.36 in.)

TITANIC'S WAKE
1998-1999

These photographs were made between the early spring of 1998 and the last day of 1999. Some were made during aresidency at the Atelier Calder in Saché, France. Alexander Calder, who went to sea as a young man, and whoseadolescence coincided with the last years of square-rigged merchant sailing vessels, translated the simple but profoundmotor logic of the wind, canvas, and rope into the sheet metal and cut steel of modernity. Like ships, mobiles go round incircles in ways that museums, however ship-like, don't.

Saché is linked to the sea through one of the tributaries of the Loire, and both the verdant encapsulation of this world andits connectedness to empire were traced much earlier by Balzac, drinking dangerous amounts of coffee and writing novelsof unrequited desire and emergent capitalism late into the night just across the river from where Calder was to build hisstudio and tinker with wire and scraps of metal.

Other photographs were made in Seattle, and in Novorossiysk on the Black Sea, Russia's last remaining ice-free port: I caneasily be accused of being all over the map. In fact, I spent good parts of 1999 tracking a redeemed rust-bucket freighter, the *Global Mariner*, on a curious snail-like circum navigation, as it carried in otherwise empty cargo holds a remarkably installed exhibition about working conditions at sea. As Jimmy McCauley, the ship's Glaswegian quartermaster, put it: «A *Titanic* happens every year, but no one hears about it.» All told, the ship visited some 78 port cities around the world, from Cape Town to Vladivostok, anticipating and encapsulating the critique of globalization that would erupt on the streets of Seattle last November. So there was something unwittingly apt in the nervous metaphor offered by the *New York Times* headline: «Shipwreck in Seattle».

The thread that links these pictures twists round a memory voiced by Miren del Olmo, trade union activist and chief mateaboard the *Global Mariner*. A Basque from a poor fishing village on the outskirts of Bilbao, daughter of a retired shipyardworker, she recalled crossing the Nervión river on her way to English class one Saturday in the late 1980^{s}, preparing for the *lingua franca* of a life at sea. Looking back at the Puente de la Salve that ten years later would be incorporated into Frank Gehry's design for the Guggenheim, she saw the suspended roadway and steel towers suddenly disappear in a fog of teargas, as displaced welders and shipwrights - her father's comrades - battled with the riot squads of the Guardia. When shefinished this story, standing watch late one December night on another sort of bridge, as the *Global Mariner* plowed throughthe winter swells of the Black Sea, following the line of flight taken almost a century earlier by the mutinous *battleship Potemkin*, she commented that she had yet to spend enough time at home to be able to visit the new museum. But in herunprofessional opinion, speaking frankly to an American, it looked like it had been built «from every can of Coke drunk in Bilbao».

As Bartleby put it to his boss: «I would prefer not to». On August 3, 2000, having completed it's mission as a good ship, an exemplary ship, a ship representing all the other invisible ships of the world, the *Global Mariner*, bearing a cargo of steelcoil, was rammed and sunk at the mouth of the Orinoco River in Venezuela, not far from the fictional refuge of Robinson Crusoë, another isolato from an earlier mercantile era.

Allan Sekula

Ces clichés ont été pris entre le début du printemps 1998 et le dernier jour de 1999. Certains l'ont été au cours d'une résidence à l'atelier Calder à Saché (Maine-et-Loire). Alexandre Calder, marin dans sa jeunesse, et dont l'adolescence coïncide avec les dernière années de la navigation à voile, traduira la logique motrice du vent, de la toile et des cordages, simple mais profonde, dans les plaques d'acier découpé de la modernité. Ses mobiles tournent en rond comme les navires mais non comme les musées, même ceux qui veulent ressembler à des navires… ou à des sculptures.

Saché est relié à la mer par l'un des affluents de la Loire, dont l'enchâssement verdoyant ainsi que les liens impériaux furent racontés par Balzac, s'abreuvant de café en quantités dangereuses, composant tard dans la nuit ses romans du désir insatisfait et de l'émergence capitaliste, juste en face de l'endroit où, sur l'autre rice, Calder construira un atelier pour bricoler ses bouts de métal.

D'autres photos sont prises à Seattle, et à Novorossiysk sur la mer Noire, dernier port russe à ne pas être fermé par les glaces en hiver. On va dire que je cours beaucoup de lièvre à la fois, mais le fait est que j'ai passé une bonne partie de 1999 à suivre un vieux cargo ravaudé, le *Global Mariner*, dans une étrange circumnavigation à vitesse d'escargot, transportant dans ses soutes vides de marchandises une remarquable exposition sur les conditions de travail en mer. Comme le dit le quartier-maître écossais, Jimmy McCauley : «Chaque année, il y a autant de morts en mer qu'à bord du *Titanic,* mais personne n'en parle.» Le cargo a fait escale dans 78 ports à travers le monde, du Cap à Vladivostok, résumant en avance la critique de la mondialisation qui allait faire irruption dans le rues de Seattle en novembre dernier. D'où la pertinence de cette métaphore inquiète à la une du *New York Times* : «Naufrage à Seattle».

Le fil qui relie toutes ces images s'enroule autour d'un souvenir évoqué par Miren del Olmo, militante syndicale, officier en second du *Global Mariner*. Originaire d'un modeste village de pêcheurs basques fille d'un ouvrier retraité des chantiers navals, elle s'est souvenue de ce samedi à la fin des années 1980 quand elle traversa le Nierviόn pour se rendre à son cours d'anglais, *lingua franca* d'une vie en mer. Ayant entendu un lointain vacarme, elle s'est retournée vers le pont situé tout près du chantier dont la mort était proche et qui fournirait dix ans plus tard le site du Guggenheim de Gehry. Soudain, elle vit disparaître le tablier et les piles d'acier dans un nuage de gaz lacrymogènes. Des soudeurs et des charpentiers licenciés - les camarades de son père - affrontaient la brigade anti-émeutes de la police nationale. Me racontant cette histoire, alors qu'elle était de quart et sur une autre sorte de pont et que le *Global Mariner* fendait la houle hivernale de la mer Noire, suivant la ligne de fuite empruntée il ya près d'un siècle par le cuirassé rebelle *Prince Potemkine*, elle observa qu'elle n'avait pas encore pu passer de temps chez elle pour visiter le nouveau musée. Mais de son point de vue de non-spécialiste, et pour être franche avec un Américain, elle pensait qu'il avait été construit avec «toutes les boîtes de Coca-Cola bues à Bilbao».

A son patron qui lui demande pourquoi il refuse de travailler, le Bartleby de Melville répond : «J'aime mieux pas.» De même, le 3 août 2000, ayant terminé sa mission de brave navire, de navire exemplaire, de navire représentant tous les autres navires invisibles du monde, le *Global Mariner*, chargé d'une cargaison de filins d'acier, éperonné à l'embouchure de l'Orénoque au Venezuela, coule à pic, non loin du refuge fictif de Robinson Crusoë, cet autre *isolato* d'une ère mercantile plus ancienne.

Allan Sekula



Portrait of Kaela Economou beaten by the Seattle Police, 2 December 1999, 1998-2000
Titanic's Wake 1998-2000 series
cibachrome print, mounted on aluminium, wooden frame, under plexiglas
tirage cibachrome contrecollé sur aluminium, cadre bois, plexiglas
72 x 100 x 6 cm (28.35 x 39.37 x 2.36 in.)
ed. of 5 + 1 AP
SEKU08034

collections:

- Mc Evoy Foundation, San Francisco (USA)
- private collection (USA)



Fish, Saché, 1998-2000
Titanic's Wake 1998-2000 series
cibachrome print, mounted on aluminium, wooden frame, under plexiglas
tirage cibachrome contrecollé sur aluminium, cadre bois, plexiglas
74 x 102 cm (29.13 x 40.16 in.)
ed. of 5 + 1 AP
private collection



Fisherman's hut, Saché, 1998-2000
Titanic's Wake 1998-2000 series
cibachrome print, mounted on aluminium, wooden frame, under plexiglas
tirage cibachrome contrecollé sur aluminium, cadre bois, plexiglas
51 x 102 cm (20.08 x 40.16 in.)
ed. of 5 + 1 AP
SEKU08009



The road to Saché, 1998
Titanic's Wake series 1998-2000
cibachrome print mounted on aluminium, 1 wooden frame, plexiglas
tirage cibachrome contrecollé sur aluminium, 1 cadre bois, plexiglas
170 x 64 x 6 cm (66.93 x 25.2 x 2.36 in.)
ed. 5 ex + 1 AP
SEKU08010





Portrait of Guillaume Blanc with oysters, 1998-2000
Titanic's Wake 1998-2000 series
2 cibachrome prints, mounted on aluminium, 2 wooden frames, under plexiglas
2 tirages cibachrome contrecollés sur aluminium, 2 cadre bois, plexiglas
173 x 66 cm (68.11 x 25.98 in.)
ed. of 5 + 1 AP
SEKU08017



Apparatus for the Drowning, 1998-2000
Titanic's Wake series
cibachrome print, mounted on aluminium, wooden frame, under plexiglas
tirage cibachrome contrecollé sur aluminium, cadre bois, plexiglas
107 x 128 cm (42.13 x 50.39 in.)
ed. of 5 ex.
private collection
SEKU08026

POLONIA AND OTHER FABLES
2007-2009

In the series *Polonia and Other Fables*, the artist combines a very personal exploration of his Polish roots with a wider investigation into emigration and the Polish-American relations in the world today. In the footsteps of the artist's paternal grandparents, the series travels from Poland to the United States. Although occasionally steering towards the autobiographical - the series features the artist's parents, images of a Polish blacksmith refers to Sekula's grandfather's occupation before emigrating - these personal details lend themselves to the wider issues being investigated, from the Polish community in Chicago to the omnipresence of the United States in Poland.

Polonia and Other Fables, critically documents and examines the social impact of global economics. Always aiming to position his work within an exhibition's local community, Sekula will develop this project to focus on Chicago's rich labor history, particularly on the large Polish immigrant population here. .

Dans la série *Polonia and Other Fables*, l'artiste combine une exploration très personnelle de ses racines polonaises avec une recherche plus large sur l'émigration et les relations americo-polonaises dans le monde actuel. Sur les traces des grands-parents paternels de l'artiste, la série voyage de la Pologne aux Etats-Unis. Bien que la série s'oriente parfois vers l'autobiographie - la série présente les parents de l'artiste, les images d'un forgeron polonais font référence à l'occupation du grand-père de Sekula avant son émigration - ces détails personnels se prêtent à des questions plus larges, de la communauté polonaise à Chicago à l'omniprésence des États-Unis en Pologne.

Polonia and Other Fables, documente et examine de façon critique l'impact social de l'économie mondiale. Toujours dans le but de positionner son travail au sein de la communauté locale d'une exposition, Sekula développera ce projet pour se concentrer sur la riche histoire ouvrière de Chicago, en particulier sur l'importante population d'immigrants polonais ici.



Factory occupation. Chicago, December 2008, 2007 - 2009
Polonia and Other Fables 2007 - 2009
chromogenic print, mounted on Dibon, wooden frame, under plexiglas
tirage chromogénique contrecollé sur Dibon, cadre bois, plexiglas
61 x 91,5 cm (24 x 36 in.)
ed. of 5 + 1 AP
SEKU11111



Boatbuilders, veterans of Gdansk shipyard and Solidarity in the 1970s and 80s. Warsaw, August 2009 / Boat builders who hope to circumnavigate the glob
Polonia and Other Fables series 2007-2009
chromogenic print mounted on dibon, wooden frame, plexiglas
impression chromogène contrecollée sur dibon, cadre bois, plexiglas
132 x 132 cm (51.97 x 51.97 in.)
ed. 5 ex + 1 AP
SEKU11116



Stodola music club. Warsaw, August 2009
Polonia and Other Fables series 2007-2009
chromogenic print mounted on dibon, wooden frame, plexiglas
impression chromogène contrecollée sur dibon, cadre bois, plexiglas
124,5 x 124,5 x 3 cm (48.82 x 48.82 x 1.18 in.)
ed. 5 ex + 1 AP
SEKU11110



CIA black site seen from across the lake just before the wrong film was confiscated. Kiejkuty, Poland, July 2009
Polonia and Other Fables series 2007-2009
chromogenic print mounted on dibon, wooden frame, plexiglas
impression chromogène contrecollée sur dibon, cadre bois, plexiglas
124,5 x 124,5 x 3 cm (48.82 x 48.82 x 1.18 in.)
ed. 5 ex + 1 AP
SEKU11084

collections:
- FRAC Normandie (France)
- Private collection



Ornette Coleman. Chicago, December 2008
Polonia and Other Fables series 2007-2009
chromogenic print mounted on dibon, wooden frame, plexiglas
impression chromogène contrecollée sur dibon, cadre bois, plexiglas
124,5 x 124,5 x 3 cm (48.82 x 48.82 x 1.18 in.)
ed. 5 ex + 1 AP
SEKU11081



Passerby. Warsaw, July 2009
Polonia and Other Fables series 2007-2009
3 chromogenic prints mounted on dibon, 3 wooden frames, plexiglas
3 impressions chromogènes contrecollées sur dibond, 3 cadres bois, plexiglas
each frame : 79 x 79 x 3 cm (31.1 x 31.1 x 1.18 in.)
ed. 5 ex + 1 AP
SEKU19146



Detail from Stanislaw Batowski Pulaski at Savannah, 1932. Polish Museum of America, Chicago, August 2007
Polonia and Other Fables series 2007-2009
chromogenic print, mounted on Dibon, wooden frame, under plexiglas
tirage chromogénique contrecollé sur Dibon, cadre bois, plexiglas
122 x 122 cm (48.03 x 48.03 in.)
ed. of 5 + 1 AP
SEKU11108



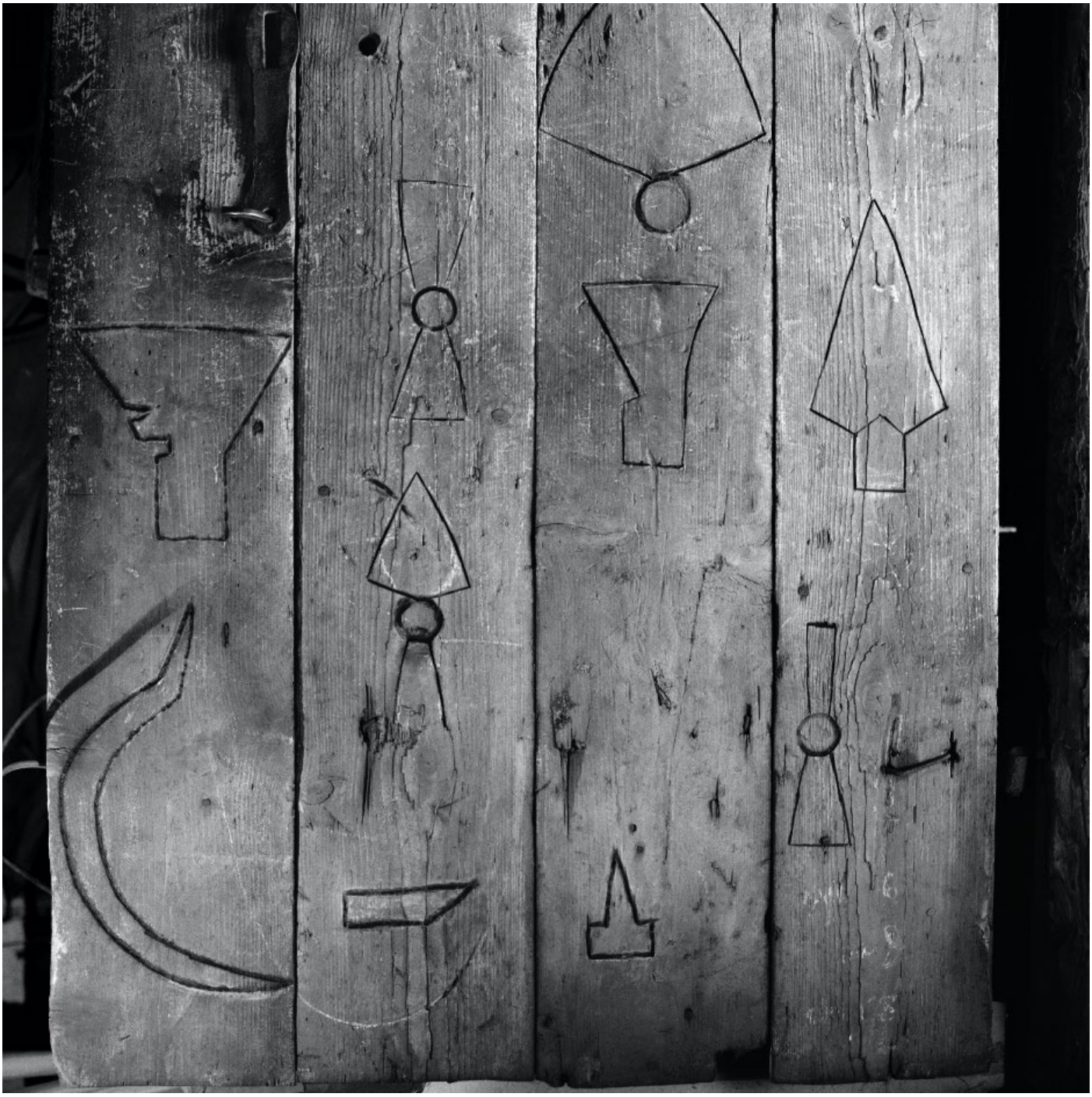
Father Andrzej who gave last rites to my father. Sacramento, December 2008
Polonia and Other Fables series 2007-2009
chromogenic print, mounted on Dibon, wooden frame, under plexiglas
tirage chromogénique contrecollé sur Dibon, cadre bois, plexiglas
107 x 107 cm (42.1 x 42.1 in.)
ed. of 5 + 1 AP
SEKU11113



Blacksmith (hammering sickle). Ochojno, Poland, July 2009
Polonia and Other Fables 2007 - 2009 series
archival inkjet print mounted on dibon, wooden frame, plexiglas
impression jet d'encre contrecollé sur dibon, cadre bois, plexiglas
109,5 x 109,5 x 3 cm (42.91 x 42.91 x 1.18 in.)
ed. of 5 + 1 AP
private collection
SEKU11097



Blacksmith's work. Ochojno, Poland, July 2009
Polonia and Other Fables series 2007-2009
archival inkjet print mounted on dibon, wooden frame, plexiglas
impression jet d'encre contrecollé sur dibon, cadre bois, plexiglas
79 x 79 x 3 cm (31.1 x 31.1 x 1.18 in.)
ed. 5 ex + 1 AP
SEKU11098



Replica of door to blacksmith's shed, in situ (original in collection of Warsaw Ethnographic Museum). Ochojno, Poland, July 2009
Polonia and Other Fables series 2007-2009
archival inkjet print mounted on dibon, wooden frame, plexiglas
impression jet d'encre contrecollé sur dibond, cadre bois, plexiglas
79 x 79 x 3 cm (31.1 x 31.1 x 1.18 in.)
ed. 5 ex + 1 AP
SEKU11096



Aerial view of pig farm owned by the American multinational Smithfield Foods. Located on site of former collective farm. Wieckowice, Poland, July 2009
Polonia and Other Fables series 2007-2009
chromogenic print, mounted on Dibon, wooden frame, under plexiglas
tirage chromogénique, contrecollé sur dibon, cadre bois, plexiglas
122 x 122 cm (48.03 x 48.03 in.)
ed. of 5 + 1 AP
SEKU11092



Holy oils, Saint Hyacinth Polish Roman Catholic Church, Chicago, 2008
Polonia and Other Fables series 2007-2009
chromogenic print, mounted on Dibon, wooden frame, under plexiglas
tirage chromogénique, contrecollé sur dibon, cadre bois, plexiglas
122 x 122 cm (48.03 x 48.03 in.)
ed. of 5 + 1 AP
SEKU11119

BLACK TIDE / MAREA NEGRA
2002-2003



Disposal Pit, Lendo, 2003
Black Tide / Marea Negra 2002-2003
cibachrome print mounted on aluminium, wooden frame, plexiglas
tirage cibachrome contrecollé sur aluminium, encadrement bois, plexiglas
53 x 128 x 6 cm (20.87 x 50.39 x 2.36 in.)
ed. of 5 + 1 AP
SEKU08040

collections:

- MUSAC - Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León, Spain
- Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna, Austria
- Private collection



Exhausted volunteers (en route from isla de Ons, 12/19/02
Black Tide / Marea Negra 2002-2003
cibachrome print, wooden frame, under plexiglas
tirage cibachrome, cadre bois, plexiglas
184 x 127 cm (72.44 x 50 in.)
ed. of 5 + 1 AP
SEKU11092

collections:

- MUSAC - Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León, Spain
- Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna, Austria
- Private collection



Fishing for fuel, surveying the damage, 2003
Black Tide / Marea Negra 2002-2003
cibachrome print, wooden frame, under plexiglas
tirage cibachrome, cadre bois, plexiglas
126,5 x 112,5 cm (49.61 x 44.09 in.)
ed. of 5 + 1 AP
SEKU16141

collections:

- MUSAC - Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León, Spain
- Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna, Austria
- Private collection

METHANE FOR ALL
2007-2008

Methane for All is a specific artwork, created within a particular context: MACBA commissioned several contemporary artists to diagnose Barcelona in the present day and to identify the city's innovation hubs. The project was an initiative of the MACBA Independent Studies Programme (PEI), entitled Metropolitan Images of the New Barcelona, which was part of the exhibition *Universal Archive. The Condition of the Document and Modern Photographic Utopia* (MACBA, 2008).

Sekula documents the arrival of LNG carriers such as the Sestao Knutsen, which was built at the shipyards in Bilbao, and Mos, from the gas deposits at Qatar, Lybia and Argelia. These tankers, which can only be photographed from the bow, the bridge and the stern - because the simple click of a mechanical shutter could produce a spark of static electricity and provoke an accident - dock in at Barcelona, the city's historic port. The artist also documents several scenes at the flammables terminal, including the construction of a new storage tank and the period of maximum alert when the police uncovered a plot to place a bomb in the city's tube system. From this terminal, the gas is channelled towards the north of the city via underwater pipes, eventually reaching the power station at Besós owned by Gas Natural.

Sekula photographed the Gas Natural tower - the headquarters of the energy company - and some of the surrounding historic buildings that are also linked to energy transformation. But his work always emphasises the human element, and how work shapes ways of life.

Methane for All est une œuvre d'art spécifique, créée dans un contexte particulier : le MACBA a chargé plusieurs artistes contemporains de diagnostiquer Barcelone à l'heure actuelle et d'identifier les pôles d'innovation de la ville. Le projet était une initiative du MACBA Independent Studies Programme (PEI), intitulé Metropolitan Images of the New Barcelona, qui faisait partie de l'exposition *Universal Archive. L'état du document et l'utopie photographique moderne* (MACBA, 2008).

Sekula documente l'arrivée de méthaniers tels que le Sestao Knutsen, construit sur les chantiers navals de Bilbao, et le Mos, provenant des gisements de gaz au Qatar, en Libye et en Argelia. Ces pétroliers, qui ne peuvent être photographiés que de l'avant, du pont et de l'arrière - car le simple clic d'un volet mécanique pourrait produire une étincelle d'électricité statique et provoquer un accident - accostent à Barcelone, port historique de la ville. L'artiste documente également plusieurs scènes au terminal des matières inflammables, dont la construction d'un nouveau réservoir de stockage et la période d'alerte maximale lorsque la police a découvert un complot pour placer une bombe dans le réseau de métro de la ville. Depuis ce terminal, le gaz est acheminé vers le nord de la ville par des conduites sous-marines, pour finalement atteindre la centrale électrique de Besós, propriété de Gas Natural.

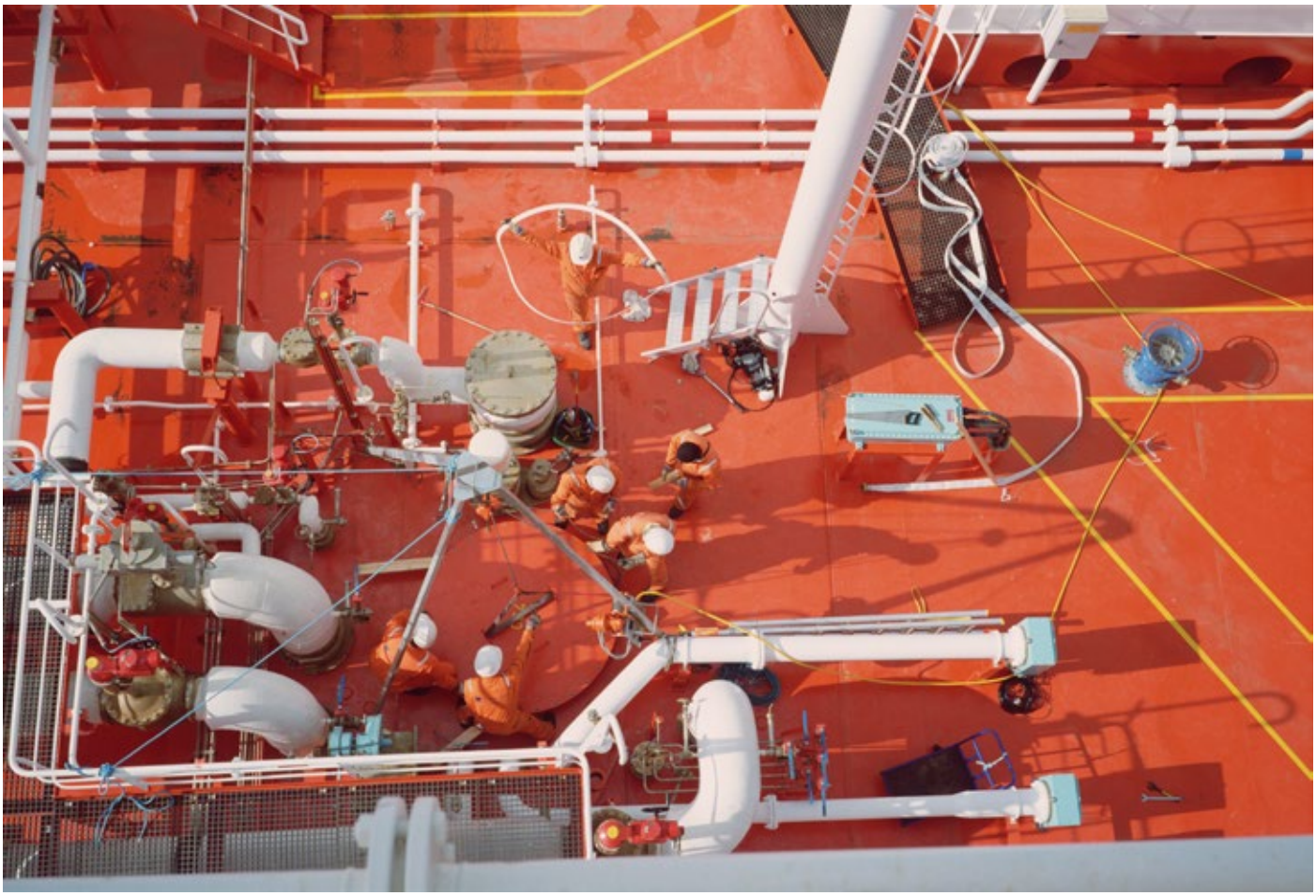
Sekula a photographié la tour Gas Natural - le siège de la société d'énergie - et certains des bâtiments historiques environnants qui sont également liés à la transformation de l'énergie. Mais son travail met toujours l'accent sur l'élément humain et sur la façon dont le travail façonne les modes de vie.



Gas Terminal, Barcelona, 2008
Methane For All series
ilfochrome print
tirage ilfochrome
76,2 x 111,7 cm (29.92 x 43.7 in.)
ed. of 5 + 1 AP
SEKU09072



Chief Mate of the Sestao Knutsen, 2008
Methane For All series
ilfochrome print
impression ilfochrome
50,8 x 73,6 cm cm (19.69 x 28.74 in.)
ed. of 5 + 1 AP
SEKU09073



Maiden voyage of the Sestao Knutsen, 2008
Methane For All series
ilfochrome print
tirage ilfochrome
101,6 x 152,4 cm (39.76 x 59.84 in.)
ed. of 5 + 1 AP
SEKU09071



Building a new methane storage tank, inflammables terminal, Barcelona, 2008
Methane For All series
ilfochrome print
impression ilfochrome
38 x 116,8 cm (14.96 x 45.67 in.)
ed. of 5 + 1 AP
SEKU09068



Barceloneta swimming, 2008
Methane For All series
ilfochrome print
tirage ilfochrome
50,8 x 76,2 cm (19.7 x 29.9 in.)
ed. of 5 + 1 AP
SEKU09070



Radiation Hazard, 2008
Methane For All series
ilfochrome print
tirage ilfochrome
each : 40,6 x 58,4 cm (16 x 23 in.)
ed. of 5
SEKU09075

VARIOUS SERIES

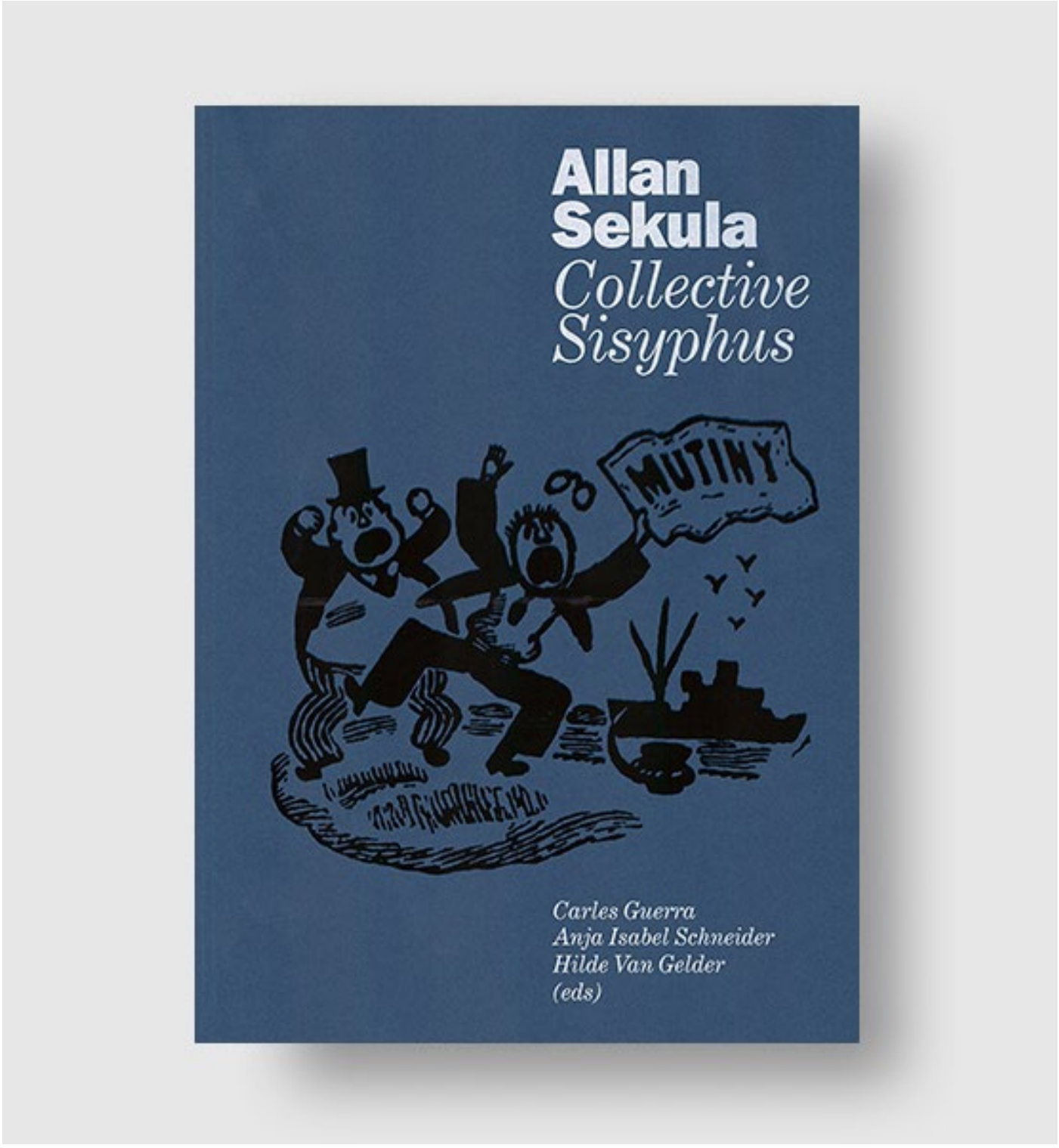


Goldsmiths, Istanbul, 2007
Shipwreck and Workers series
chromogenic print mounted on aluminum, wooden frame, plexiglas
tirage chromogénique contrecollé sur aluminium, cadre bois, plexiglas
73 x 264,5 cm (28.7 x 103.9 in.)
ed. of 5 + 1 AP
SEKU08043

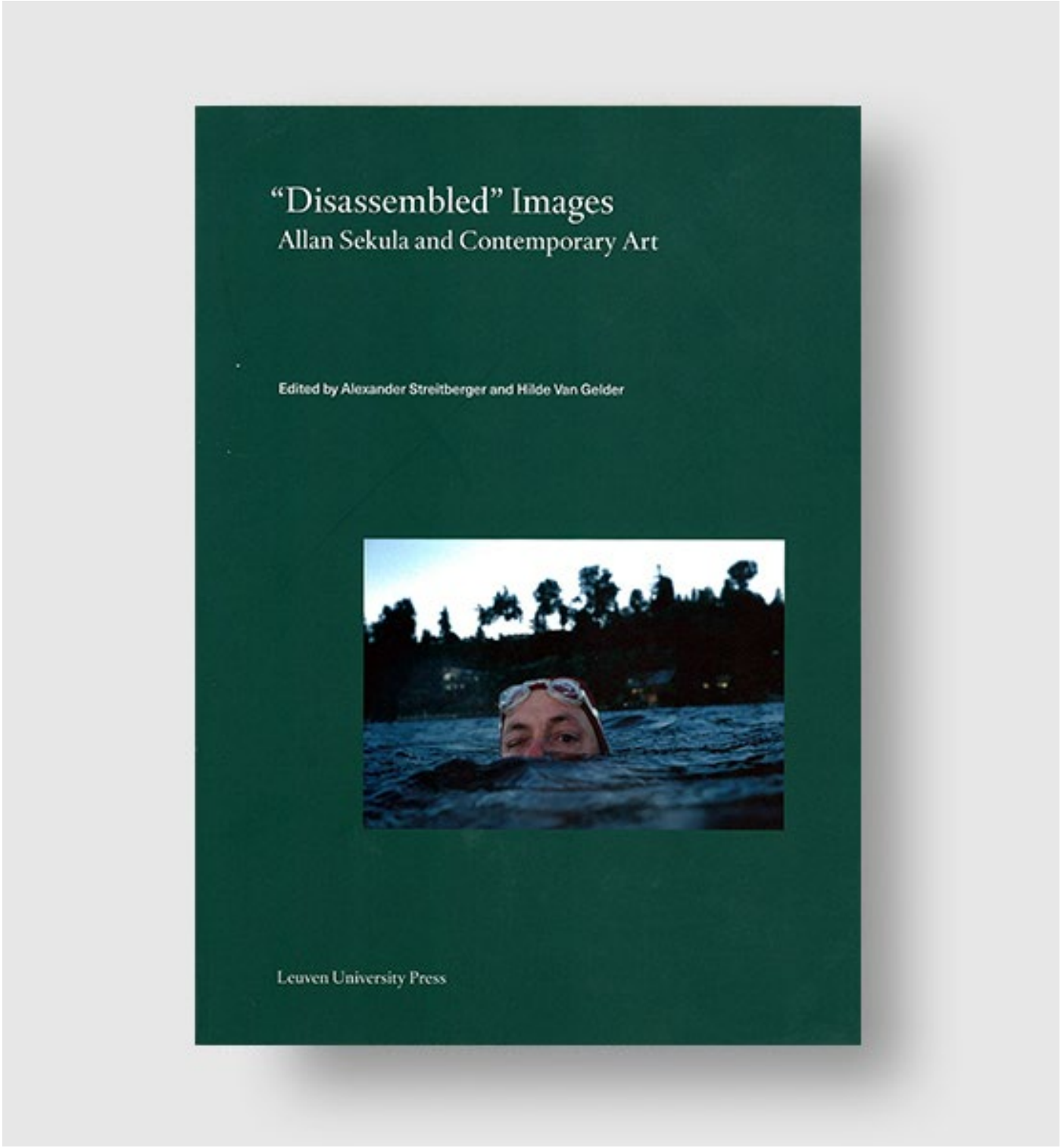


Eyes closed assembly line, 2010
cibachrome transparency in light box
cibachrome dans caisson lumineux
99 x 145 x 12,7 cm (38.98 x 57.09 x 4.72 in.)
unique artwork
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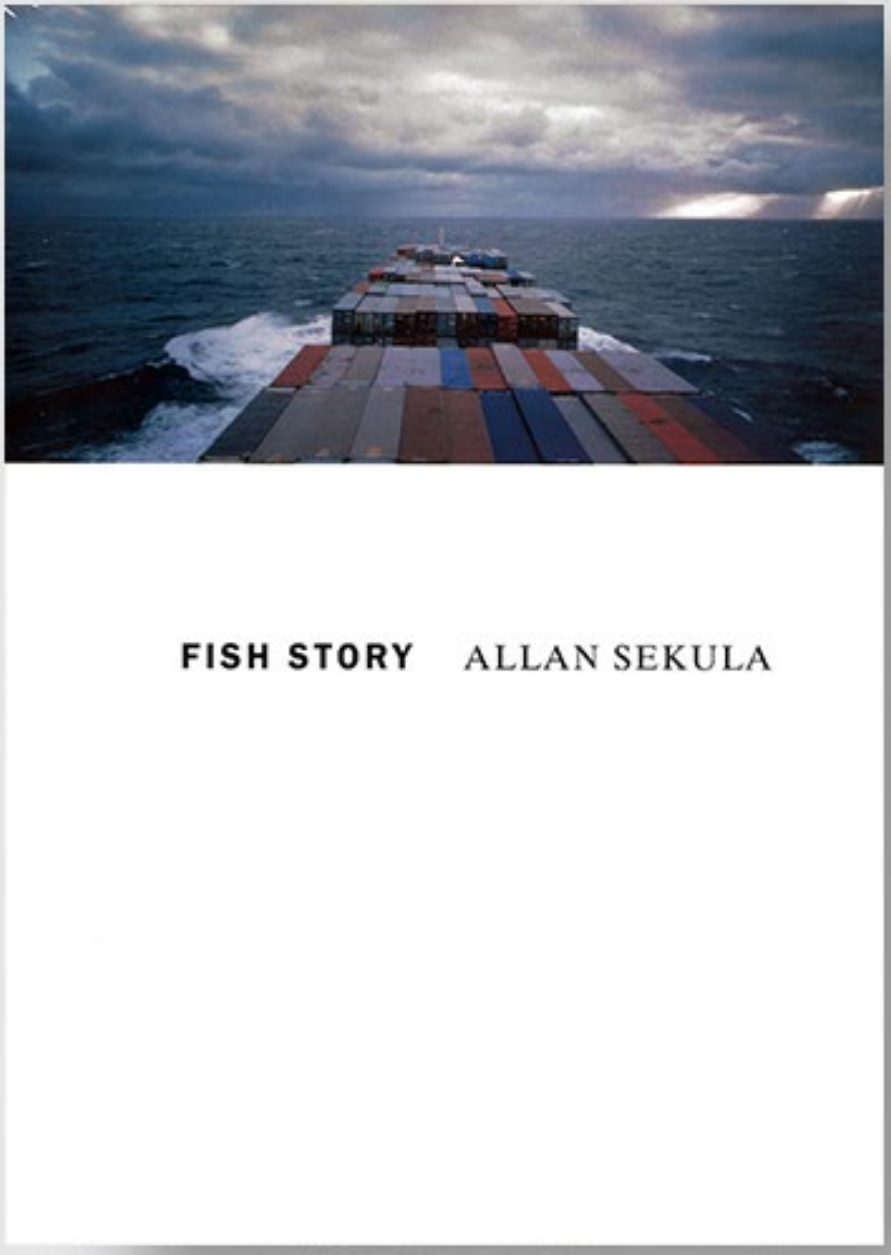
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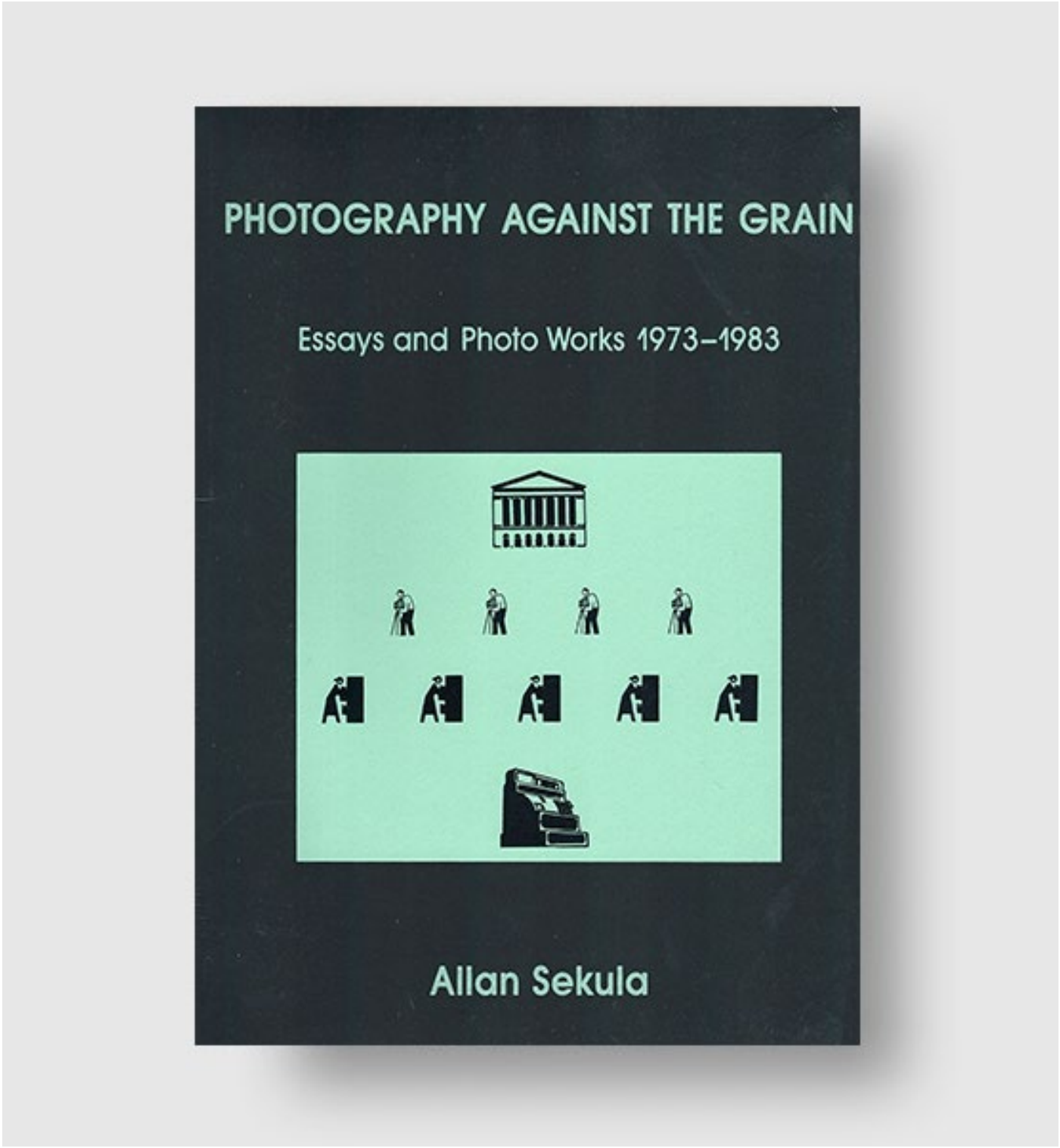
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Ed. Koenig Books
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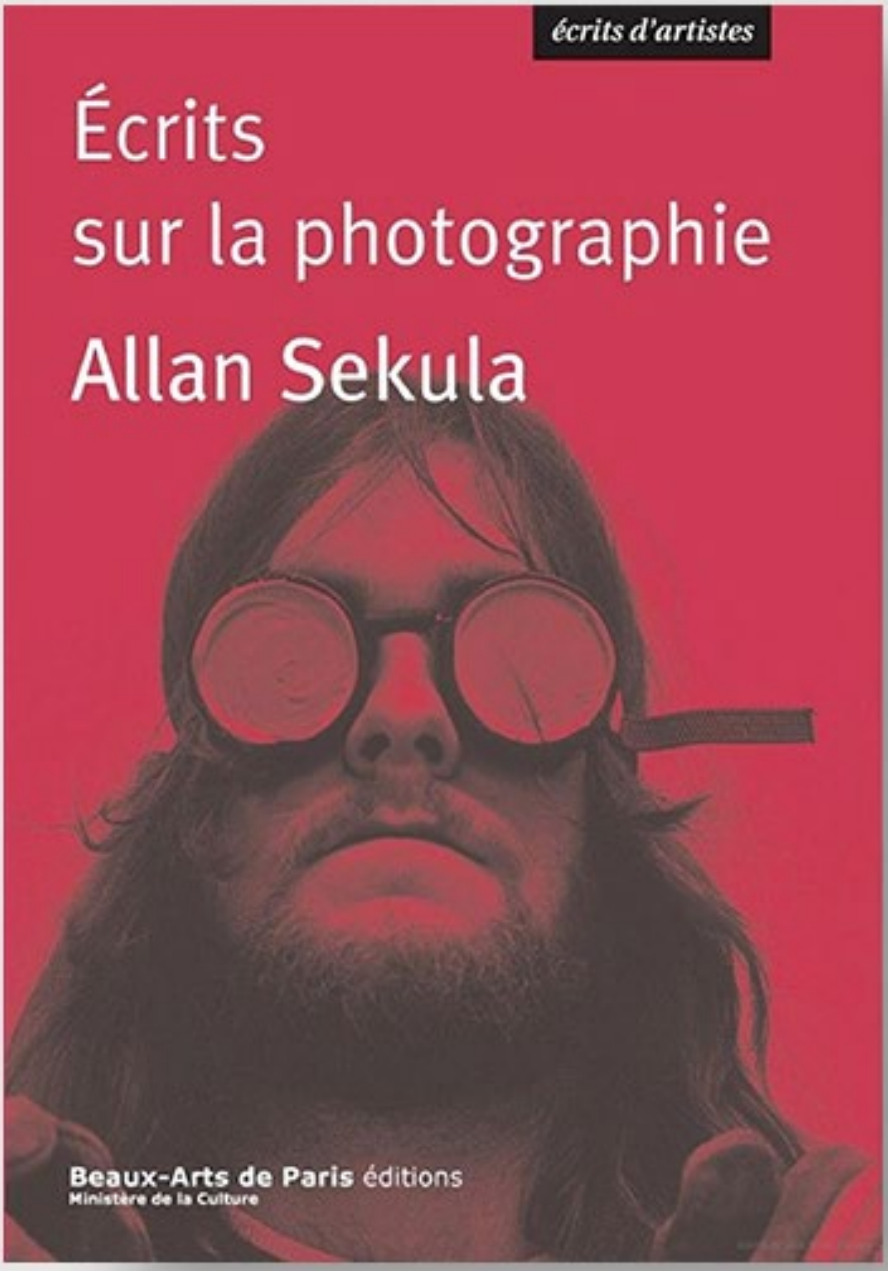
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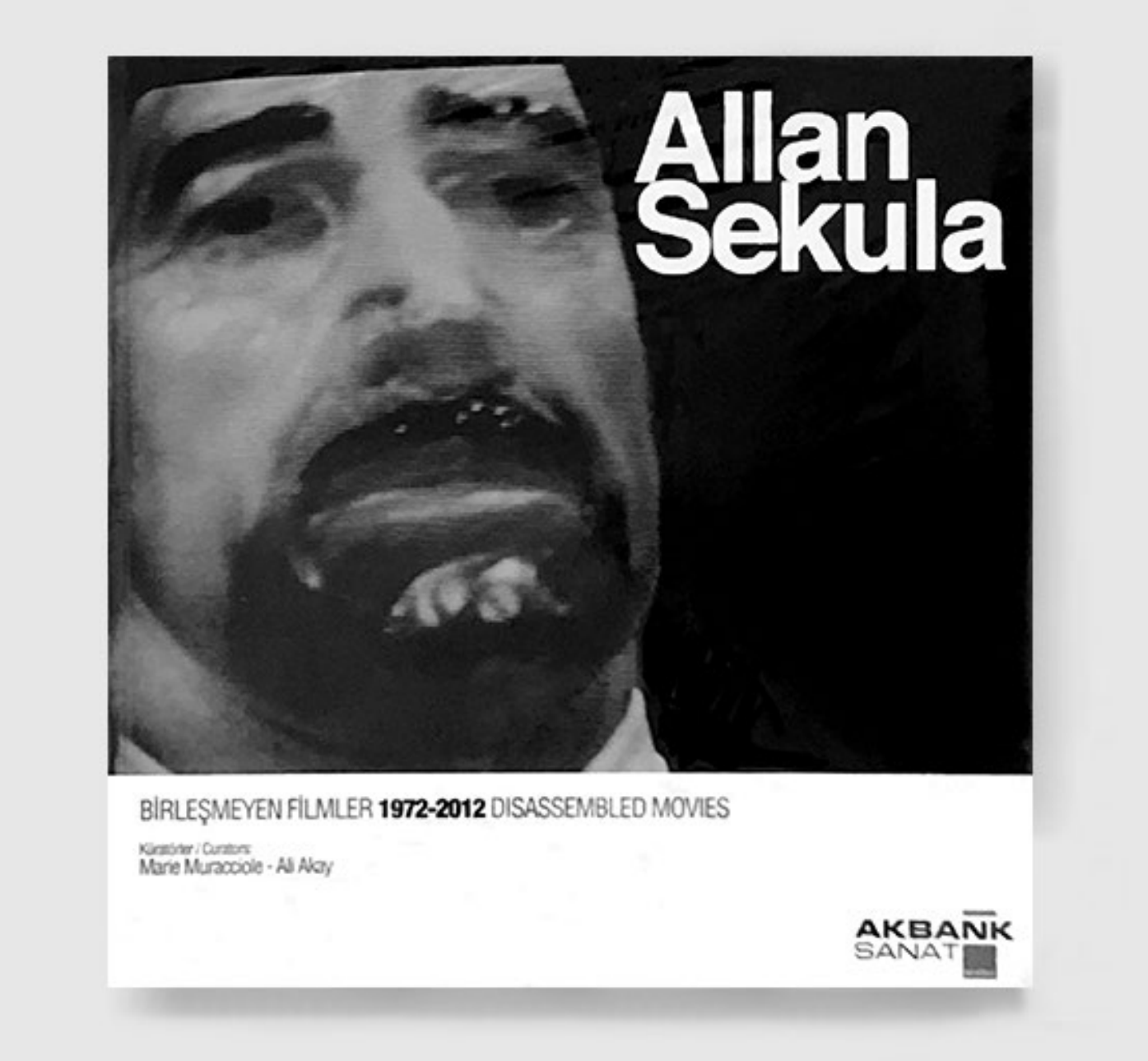
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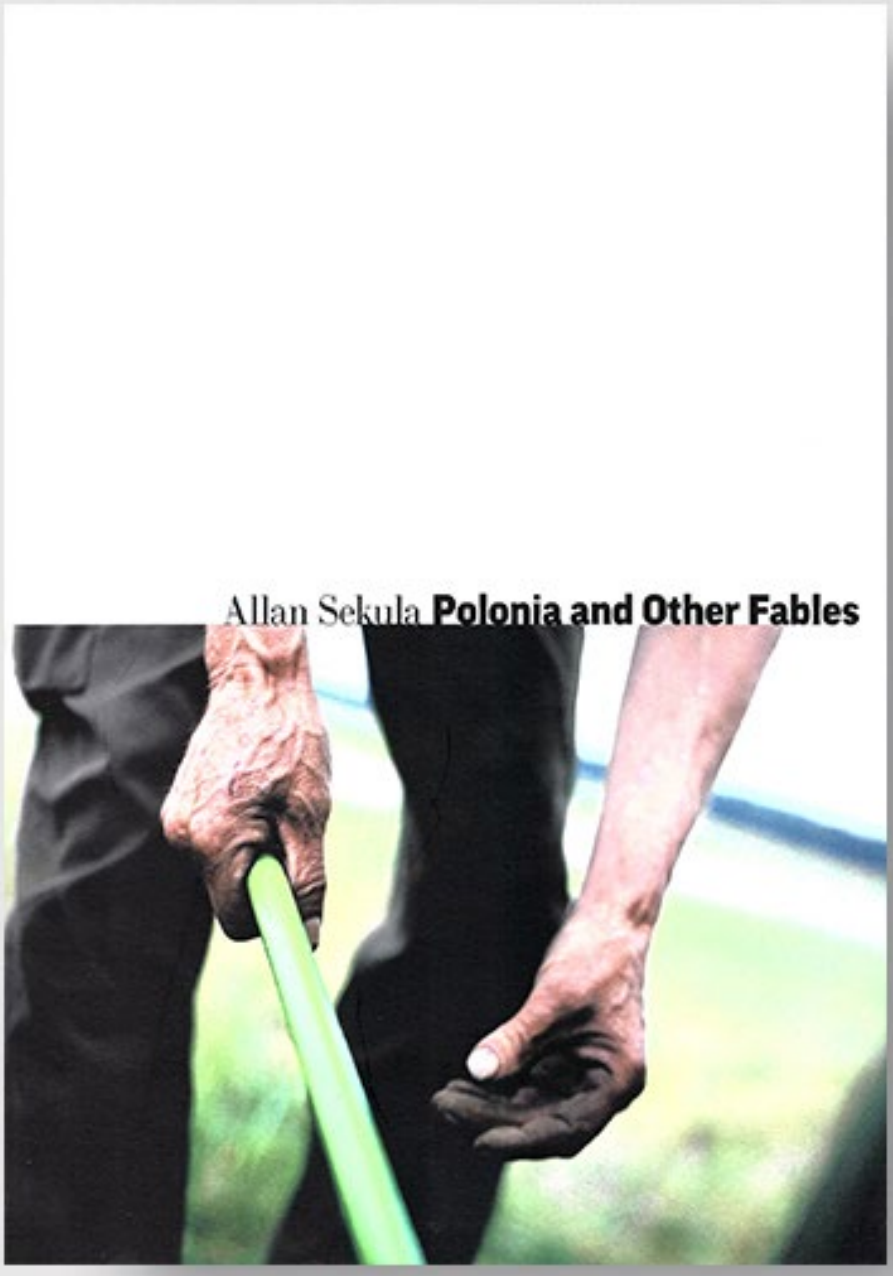
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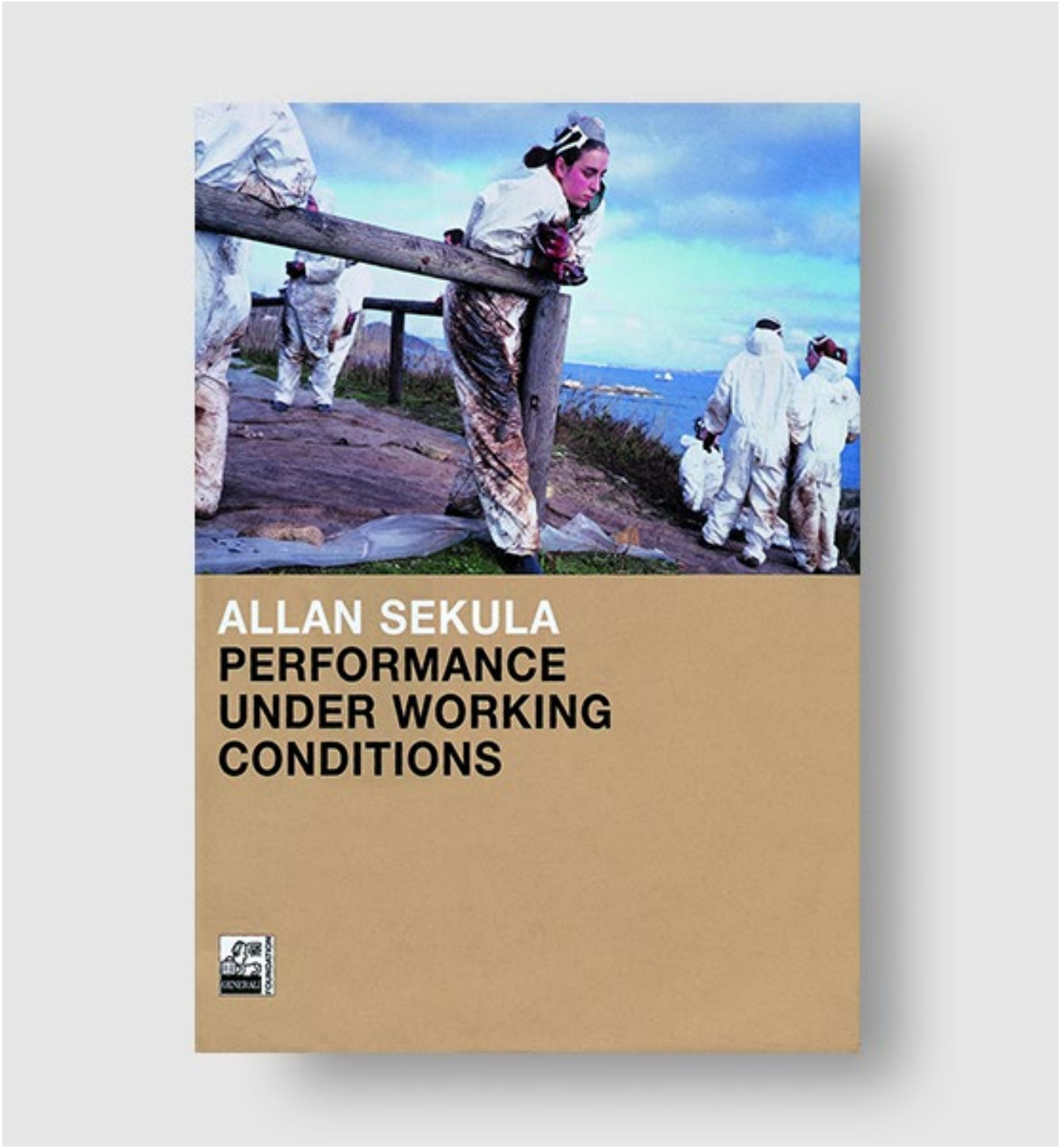
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Texts by Allan Sekula
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French
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Texts by Allan Sekula, Marie Muracciole, Ali Akay
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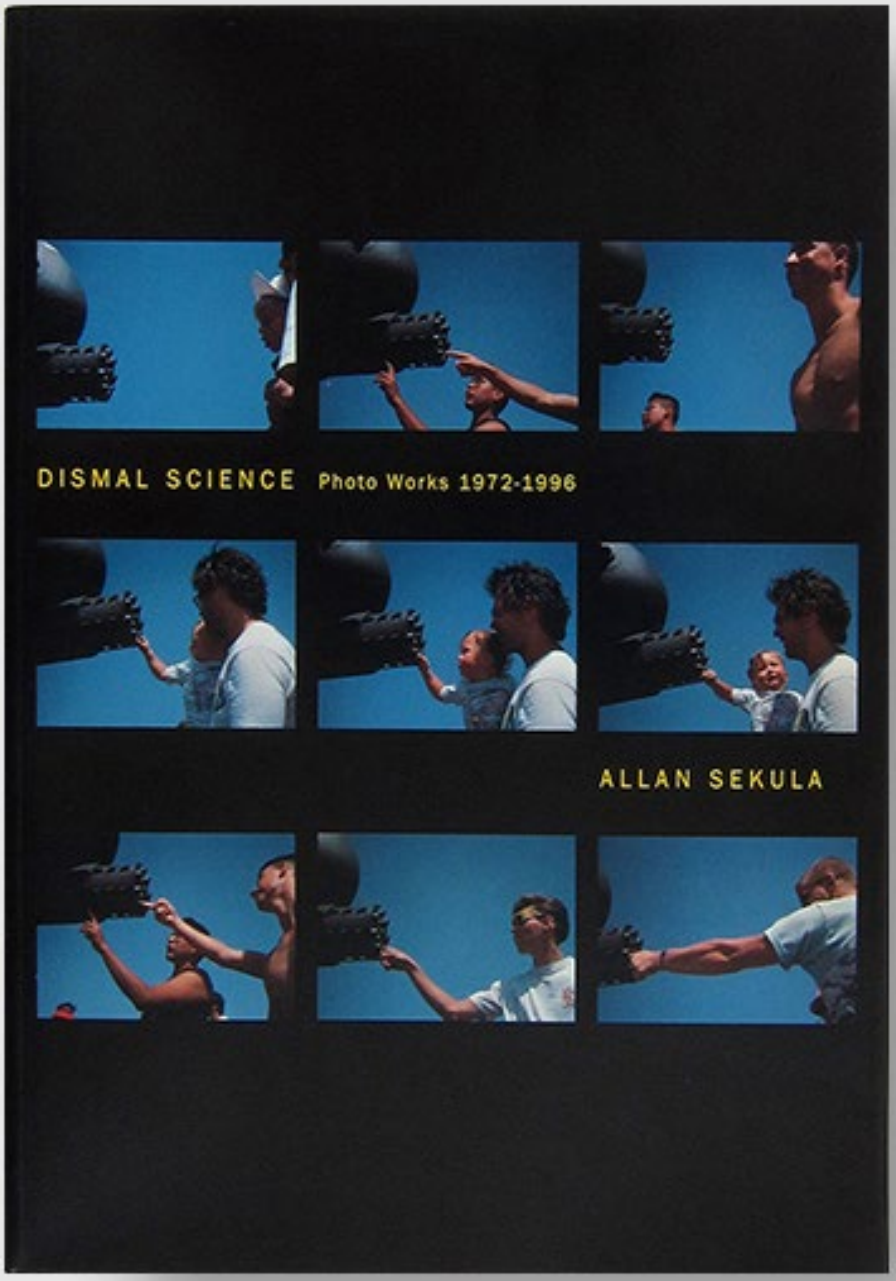
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Texts by Allan Sekula
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PRESS

Allan Sekula
Libération
November 04th, 2019
by Clémentine Mercier

ALLAN SEKULA

CULTURE

PARIS, OBJECTIF PHOTOS

Par Clémentine Mercier
— 4 novembre 2019 à 20:01

Petites expos en ville

Galeries et institutions se parent aussi de photographies. Si Smith est à la galerie les Filles du Calvaire (75003), on retrouve feu Allan Sekula à la galerie Michel Rein (75003) avec une de ses premières séries montrant des travailleurs californiens quittant une usine aéronautique à la fin de leur service, en référence aux frères Lumière. Au Gœthe Institut de Paris, la jeune garde allemande vient s'exposer autour de l'idée de frontières (qu'elles soient physiques, géographiques, politiques, conceptuelles), avec les œuvres des étudiants post-diplôme de Heidi Specker, prof à la Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst (HGB) de Leipzig. Celles de Hanna Stiegeler s'intéressent aux frontières entre sphères publique et privée, autodétermination et fonction à travers les corps de femmes enceintes. La galerie Miranda (75010) et la galerie Michael Hoppen (Londres) s'associent pour montrer «Corps formels» avec les tirages noir et blanc de Fernand Fonssagrives, premier mari du mannequin Lisa Fonssagrives devenue femme d'Irving Penn, et les mises en scène sexy de Noé Sendas.

THE NEW YORKER

Allan Sekula
The New Yorker
July 17th, 2018
by Johanna Fateman

ART

Allan Sekula

This influential L.A.-based photographer, critic, and educator died in 2013, at the age of sixty-two, but his Marxist sensibility feels attuned to the present moment—art for the age of the Squad. Among the earliest pieces on view in this career-spanning show is "This Ain't China," from 1974, which documents a group of pizzeria employees (Sekula included) as they consider going on strike. The piece juxtaposes a textbook management diagram with black-and-white photos of the workers in a cramped kitchen, with the fruits of their labor (a pepperoni pizza, a basket of fries) appearing in color, like ads. Sekula was committed to making self-implicating art, keenly aware of photography's role in both defining and challenging the social order. The images in "Dead Letter Office," from 1996-97—of the Republican National Convention, a Tijuana coffin factory, and a ship impounded for smuggling immigrants—lay out complex and disturbing connections. His sombre slide sequence "Waiting for Tear Gas [white globe to black]," from 1999-2000, which was shot from the crowd during anti-W.T.O. protests in Seattle, is an elegant testament to the rigor of his still searing critique.

— *Johanna Fateman*

ARTNEWS

Allan Sekula
ARTNEWS
July 17th, 2018
by Alex Greenberger

Hot in Cleveland: Front International Triennial Kicks Off in Ohio with Promising First Edition

A.K BURNS, ALLAN SEKULA



Opening night at the Front International: Cleveland Triennial for Contemporary Art.
ALEX GREENBERGER/ARTNEWS

In 1982, when she was an undergraduate student studying in Wisconsin, Michelle Grabner drove for the first time from the Milwaukee to New York. Cleveland lies halfway between Milwaukee and the Big Apple, and she can still recall how she felt when she stopped there to visit the Cleveland Museum of Art. She was instantly bowled over by the institution's Marcel Breuer–designed building, and still today she feels a connection to it.

"I always felt like I knew Cleveland, like I had a relationship with the city," Grabner told me outside the museum last week. She was in town to inaugurate the first Front International: Cleveland Triennial for Contemporary Art, which she curated. Its organizers hope the show becomes a regular stop on the art calendar, a zeitgeist-channeling affair like the biennales of Berlin and Venice, though as not a few people have remarked, its location is off the radar of the globetrotting jet set. Grabner was not phased by that.

"I really believe in the Midwest, especially now, as these regions and cities are becoming more hospitable to artists," Grabner, a Wisconsin native, said. "Centers are important—they circulate ideas, they circulate work—but maybe [cities like Cleveland] are important places for making work and for having ideas that then go to the centers. These cities are starting to thrive. I think they're the future."

Grabner's positivity was inescapable at the triennial's opening last week, which had attracted people from across the nation. It had the energy of a major event. Scattered across Cleveland, Akron, and Oberlin were works by more than 110 artists, at venues both large and small, from the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland and the Akron Art Museum to unconventional spaces, like the front yard of a church in Cleveland's Glenville neighborhood, an historic steamship docked in Lake Erie, and, naturally, the city's famed Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.



The late artist Allan Sekula's nearly-three-hour film *The Lottery of the Sea* (2006) is being shown in its entirety in the steamship William G. Mather, near the Great Lakes Science Center.

ALEX GREENBERGER/ARTNEWS

"The hope is that people just bump into this art and get intrigued," Fred Bidwell, the triennial's CEO, said the morning after the first preview day, at Transformer Station, an art space that he and his wife, Laura, run in Cleveland's gentrifying Ohio City neighborhood. He explained that he'd modeled the Front International on Documenta, the quinquennial based in Kassel, Germany, and that the triennial's budget was around $5 million, a fraction of the more than $40 million allocated to the 2017 edition of that quinquennial, but a full $1 million more than the most recent edition of the Prospect New Orleans triennial had.

Front's list of contributing artists has helped build its cachet—included in the show are Candice Breitz's *Love Story* (2016), a critically lauded seven-screen video installation about forced emigration that also appeared in South Africa's pavilion at last year's Venice Biennale, and Gerard Byrne's *In Our Time* (2017), a piece about a radio station that debuted at the 2017 edition of Skupltur Projekte Münster. Many of the works were newly commissioned or reformulated for the triennial, however, and most had something to do with local history.

Grabner's positivity was inescapable at the triennial's opening last week, which had attracted people from across the nation. It had the energy of a major event. Scattered across Cleveland, Akron, and Oberlin were works by more than 110 artists, at venues both large and small, from the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland and the Akron Art Museum to unconventional spaces, like the front yard of a church in Cleveland's Glenville neighborhood, an historic steamship docked in Lake Erie, and, naturally, the city's famed Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.



Dawoud Bey, *Night Coming Tenderly, Black*, 2017, at St. John's Church.
COURTESY THE ARTIST, RENA BRANSTEN GALLERY, AND STEPHEN DAITER GALLERY/FIELD STUDIO

One of the most-discussed works during the opening festivities was Dawoud Bey's elegant photo installation *Night Coming Tenderly, Black* (2017), which was on view a few minutes from Bidwell's Transformer Station, at St. John's Episcopal Church. Above the church's pews hang a set of dark black images of branches, trees, and fences. They refer to the history of the Underground Railroad, which had stops in Cleveland and Hudson, Ohio, where Bey took these pictures. But they are not documentary photographs, Bey cautioned. "I didn't want to do a documentary project, just document Underground Railroad sites—that kind of work has already been done," he said. "I wanted to make . . . something that would be a reimagining of that history." In doing the project, Bey said he was "trying to imagine the experience of navigating these spaces and making photographs that were analogies to that experience, and also printing them to give a sense of this movement under cover of darkness through the landscape."

Other works took the form of dramatic gestures, whether large-scale sculpture or ambitious conceptualism. Tony Tasset, who was born in Cincinnati, unveiled a 20-foot-tall sculpture titled *Judy's Hand Pavilion*—a metallic-looking, gargantuan version of his wife's hand—in a plaza outside MOCA. "She thought it could've used a little moisturizer," Tasset said of his wife's reaction to the piece as people took selfies beneath the sculpture's mega-sized palm. At the organization Spaces, for a project called *A Color Removed*, Michael Rakowitz attempted to remove from Cleveland all orange objects, which the Chicago-based artist, citing various writings by color theorists, believes are associated with safety. And at the city's public library, Yinka Shonibare MBE debuted *The American Library*, a shelf filled with more than 6,000 colorful tomes, each of them dedicated to an immigrant or a person who'd spoken out against immigrants.



A. K. Burns, *The Dispossessed*, 2018, at Transformer Station.
ALEX GREENBERGER/ARTNEWS

Outside Transformer Station, A. K. Burns debuted the sculpture *The Dispossessed*, a pair of fences that look as though they were crushed by heavy machinery. Standing next to her sculpture, Burns explained that she was fascinated by fences she spotted throughout Ohio City, which she said "appear around construction sites and empty lots, as markers of ongoing gentrification." She thought that the fences could be metaphors for borders, and she wanted to break them down. "I got so frustrated, and I was like, 'Ah, I want to crumple these fences!' " she said. With a laugh, she added, "You'd think it would be more fun. It's actually not easy to crush the fence."

At the the apartment-sized installation Let It Bee Ark Hive, which is open by appointment, Julie Ezelle Patton paid homage to her artist–mother, Virgie, through what she called "a living and breathing historical Glenville sanctuary." In the apartment space she intermingled her own art and that of her mother, who died in 2015. Figurative canvases by Patton's mother were assembled in clusters in bathrooms, closets, and living rooms, and these pictures—self-portraits, pictures of flowers against stark backgrounds, and more—conjured the ghosts of the neighborhood's past for present-day audiences.

Local narratives were threaded throughout the triennial, thanks to Grabner placing an emphasis on showing Midwestern artists, and at the Cleveland Institute of Art, she organized the exhibition "The Great Lakes Research," a group show featuring 21 artists from Milwaukee, Chicago, Toronto, Detroit, Cleveland, and other cities with whom she had personally conducted studio visits. On opening night, the exhibition was packed.

> The festivities continued a few blocks away at MOCA, where a celebration was held for VIPs. Amid mini-exhibitions by Josh Kline, Martine Syms, and Johnny Coleman, curators and artists milled about, snapping Instagrams and donning 3-D glasses to watch Cyprien Gaillard's film *Nightlife* (2015), which recently screened at Gladstone Gallery in New York. The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston chief curator Eva Respini, ArtPrize artistic director Kevin Buist, and SculptureCenter director Mary Ceruti were among the attendees.

Amid the opening proceedings, some could also be found trying out Lin Ke's piece *Here and Now*, an augmented reality work that can be accessed by downloading the app LayAr and holding one's phone up to prints mounted on MOCA's walls to view videos by the Chinese artist. (Getting phones to register the codes needed to access the piece proved to be a challenge. Many visitors had to fumble around for a few minutes before they could get the videos to start.) One shows a series of computers being opened by an unseen user who mouses over each one—they are titled after things like the universe and various planets, and get smaller and smaller in their scale, until they culminate in the artist's mind. For Ke, who lived in Cleveland while preparing for the triennial, the project is about adjusting to a new culture. "When you leave a place and go to a new city, you always need to learn a local language," he told me via email.

That is perhaps important advice for out-of-town visitors to Front as well. "I had to invite artists to a place that some of them had never heard of before," Grabner said. "Some of them had a misunderstanding of what's happening here, so I really had to work hard and be a promoter." Bidwell began the fundraising process for the 2021 edition of the triennial during the opening weekend, and before too long a new artistic director will have the job of proselytizing for Cleveland. "If this triennial is successful," Grabner said, "the future can only be more interesting."

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art agenda

Allan Sekula
Art Agenda
July 28th, 2017
by Travis Dielh



Allan Sekula, Middle Passage, chapter 3, Fish Story, 1994. © Allan Sekula, Photo by The Estate of Allan Sekula, 1994.

Spaces—Containers

Spaces is a feature of art-agenda that proposes a thematic examination of exhibition spaces based on the analysis of their physical and spatial configurations. Every two months, art-agenda publishes a new reflection on galleries' architecture, identity, and relation with their historical and geographical context. The latest instalment of Spaces considers the history of displaying contemporary art in shipping containers.

In August 2016, as global logistics firms slumped toward overcapacity, South Korean shipping giant Hanjin went conspicuously belly up. Over 80 of their cargo ships were suddenly turned away from ports around the world, while hundreds of multinational crew faced the further problem of securing either safe repatriation or another job. It was disaster for Hanjin, but a lucky break for Vancouver's Access Gallery: among the sailors on a Hanjin carrier drifting beyond Tokyo was an artist, Rebecca Moss, whose "Twenty-Three Days at Sea" travelling artist residency stretched to a tense twenty-five. Suddenly, the obscure transit over distant ocean—what Allan Sekula calls the "forgotten space"—was making headlines in a way that an art project rarely does.

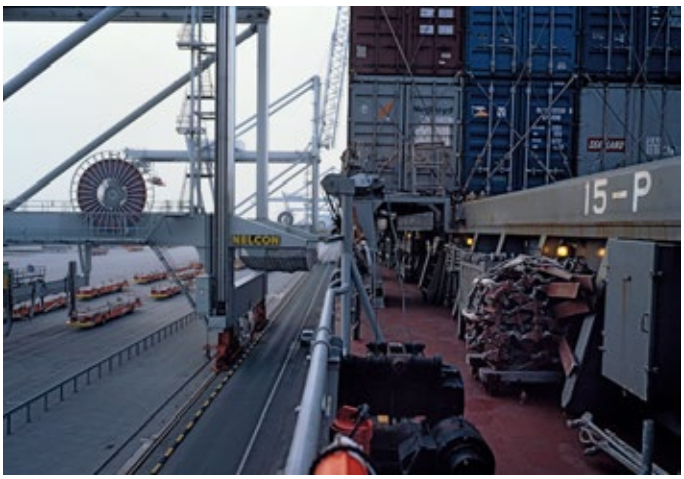
Hanjin bowed out just 60 years after Malcom McLean, a truck driver-turned-logistics capitalist, patented the 33-foot precursor to today's standardized 40-foot container. Thanks to containerized shipping, irregular goods became regularized "flows"—timetables, tonnages, coordinates, and costs(1)—and the calculus of global trade achieved truly incomprehensible scale. This smooth logistical abstraction, by which we can forget that most goods still travel by ship, is coupled, dramatically, with the visual abstraction of the container—rack after rack of colorful, branded

boxes, contents unknown; a found minimalism, a volumetric neo-geo. If these former logistical concerns are perhaps better understood by non-art specialists, this latter aesthetic dimension gives art an in. Indeed, the art world has been infatuated by cargo containers since the early aughts—not only using them for the setting of residencies like "Twenty-Three Days at Sea" and the aptly named Container Artist Residency, but employing them as art fair booths, mobile galleries, and sculpture materials. Yet as with the extent of global shipping itself, a kind of inbuilt invisibility lubricates the system. The art-world ubiquity of the standard shipping container goes largely unremarked—until something goes wrong.



2. Rebecca Moss, International Waters, 2017.

Moss, part seafaring laborer, part a containerized good herself, became an accidental symbol of a globalized art industry operating with little oversight under its own flags of convenience. Meanwhile, the art market hurries art objects toward an ultimate commodification. Today even a very famous painting might be bought sight unseen and immediately parked in a container at a freeport in Switzerland, sometimes to change hands again without changing location. Sekula memorably calls the cargo container the "very emblem of capitalist disavowal";(2) the opaque box, indifferent to its contents, sheers goods from their specificity and abstracts the labor of their production and transport. Art "appreciates" in purely financial terms; it is not appreciated.(3)



5. Allan Sekula, Middle Passage, chapter 3, Fish Story, 1994.

As Picassos languish in Geneva, the next hot buys are on view at the fairs—sometimes already containerized. Art Basel Miami Beach inaugurated the trend in 2002, in its first edition, with the Art Positions program, a selection of "cutting-edge" galleries housed in an off-site block of "shipping containers converted to public art spaces by avant-garde architects."(4) The segment was billed as an opportunity for galleries who couldn't afford true booths to nonetheless have a shot with Art



7. View of Alexandra Bowers's "Onloaded 2," Hot Box Shipping Container Gallery, Phoenix, 2015.

Basel clientele. Turning steel boxes into white cubes is both practically and conceptually convenient—a mark of global motility to signal the transactional ease of a global fair. Fittingly, the project was initially sponsored by Danzas, once the fair's official logistics partner.

The containerized gallery isn't a destination so much as a vehicle. The shipping container, for art and otherwise, is a logistical solution—readymade, modular, cheap, deployable, and revocable. At Documenta 14 in Kassel, when organizers needed a ground-level entrance for art displayed in a disused underground train station, they topped the old stairwell with a container. ("The lower level suggests a point of transit," read the press materials, "in this case, of artworks that have perhaps just arrived or are about to depart.") Elsewhere, as with Art Positions, the container offers flexible access to the more staid, brick-and-mortar nodes of commerce. The Hot Box container gallery project in Phoenix, for instance, opened on gallery row in 2016. In New York, the DiVA Video Art Fair (2005-2008) included DiVA Streets, a handful of containers placed in "strategic areas of Chelsea."(5) Nearby, the Photoville fair, annual since 2011, stacked containers into a dockside display of documentary media—if not of globalization itself, then of images of globalized society.

As the shipping container's novelty has worn thin, the desires it formalizes have grown plain. From 2005-2012, ContainerArt, a defunct worldwide container-based exhibition project, visited Edmonton, Vancouver, and a series of Italian port cities. The organizers envisioned "empty containers ambling around the world, filling with beauty wherever they stop."(6) Such a modular anymuseumwhatever—space without location and transaction without movement—is nothing less than the abstract endgame of logistics.

In the container, this symbolic "immateriality" remains welded to an irrevocable structure. From Photoville on the harbor to Chelsea's gentrified warehouses, containerized art marks the overlap between global art and global shipping, as both make landfall in the same post-industrial districts. In Chelsea, for instance—historically the meatpacking district, all docks and warehouses—the High Line that terminates at Renzo Piano's Whitney Museum once carried containers. When Daly Genik (now Kevin Daly Architects) turned an old aircraft factory into the south campus of Pasadena's ArtCenter College of Design in 2004, at the height of the container craze, they couldn't resist a post-industrial flourish: jammed into the ground at crystalline angles near the west entrance are five whitewashed containers. What was meant as a kind of local specificity (the port of L.A. is among North America's largest) is not so local or specific (one container port looks much like the next). More durable is the signal to students that global commodities are still designed and packaged within.

The "abstract," even classically minimalist format of the container remains irresistible to urban designers. Even where no vacant warehouse or factory exists, a container or two might provide new construction with a dislocated post-industrial chic. The typology expands from galleries to their accoutrements—coffee kiosks, bars, shops—and, inevitably, to housing.(7) As with other artistic uses of post-industrial space, practical measures (cheapness, availability) have become an aesthetic: the cultured taste that reimagines greasy factories as sun-filled lofts now sees airless boxes as efficient homes. It's worth underscoring how these latter-day, trendy developments are entirely voluntary. When Rob Rhinehart, founder and CEO of tech-minded meal replacement brand Soylent, attempted to live in a bright red container airlifted to a hilltop in L.A.'s Lincoln Heights, he did so in the luxury of choice. Like

a cruel parody of international modernism, the 40-foot unit had been punched with panoramic windows, and contained little besides a bed. Inside and outside indeed blurred, as this particular experiment in sustainable living was quickly abandoned to blight.(8)



11. View of ContainerArt, Vancouver, 2013-2014.

The container is both surface and volume—the emblem of capitalist disavowal, and a box for that which is disavowed. For those in the developed world who don't load and unload goods for a living, the inside provides a hard steel thrill akin to a tour on a decommissioned battleship, where most of the moving parts have been painted frozen. This groomed novelty masks a violent utility. Where a container gallery or booth might offer access to richer markets, identical containers serve to smuggle human cargo desperate for more basic opportunities.(9) Sekula's Fish Story (1996), the definitive essay on the subject, includes several photographs of waterfront vendors who sell snacks to container-port workers by day and sleep inside beached containers. This is a living experiment, too; but it is not sustainable. In this light, civic proposals to use containers to house the homeless, detain refugees,(10) or even fast-track a retirement home have the tang of schemes to store undesirables out of sight. As Stefano Harney and Fred Moten remind us, logistics is inherently anti-subjective, and the shipping container a relentlessly anti-human object.(11)

Yet in this, too, the container's sheer "neutral" materiality might broker denial. Art's adoption of the shipping container expresses honesty and cynicism: art is a business, art/artists are commodities, so why not inhabit the bare symbol of logistical abstraction? Perhaps this much is old news. And perhaps, where we're attuned to globalization's considerable human cost, we remain in thrall to the container's power to abstract the most uncomfortable congruencies into a 40-foot block of forgotten

space.

(1) Even so, Stefano Harney and Fred Moten write in The Undercommons that the fledgling logistics of mid-century owed its success to the adoption of the shipping container by the U.S. military: "Containerization was failing as a business innovation until the American government used containers to try to supply its troops in South East Asia with enough weapons, booze, and drugs to keep them from killing their own officers, to keep a war going that could not be won strategically." Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, "Fantasy in the Hold," The Undercommons (Wivenhoe: Minor Compositions, 2013), 89.
(2) Allan Sekula, in conversation with Debra Risberg, "Imaginary Economies," Dismal Science (Normal: Illinois State University, 1999), 248.
(3) See Graham Bowley and Doreen Carvajal, "One of the World's Greatest Art Collections Hides Behind This Fence," The New York Times, May 28, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/29/arts/design/one-of-the-worlds-greatest-art-collections-hides-behind-this-fence.html.
(4) See the description of Art Positions on the Art Basel Miami Beach 2002 website, archived at https://web.archive.org/web/20021105113856/http://www.artbasel.com:80/miami_beach/key_facts/index.html.
(5) See the DiVA Fair website, archived at https://web.archive.org/web/20070227020243/http://www.diva-fair.com/ny_07/diva.html.
(6) http://www.containerart.org.
(7) See Fiona Shipwright, "Here's Johnny... A Container Village for Students in Berlin," uncube blog, September 23, 2015, http://www.uncubemagazine.com/blog/15970711. See also the architect Peter DeMaria, famous for his "cargo container based buildings": http://demariadesign.com/2/.
(8) See Rory Caroll, "Soylent CEO's shipping container home is a 'middle finger' to LA, locals say," The Guardian, July 27, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/jul/27/soylent-ceo-rob-rhinehart-shipping-container-home-la.
(9) See Aidan Lewis, "Bodies of 27 migrants recovered in west Libya, 13 in shipping container," Reuters, February 23, 2017, http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-europe-migrants-libya-idUKKBN16225U.
(10) See Patrick Wintour, "Hungary to detain all asylum seekers in container camps," The Guardian, March 7, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/07/-hungary-to-detain-all-asylum-seekers-in-container-camps.
(11) See Harney and Moten, "Fantasy in the Hold."

Travis Diehl lives in Los Angeles. He is a recipient of the Creative Capital/Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant.



10. View of Photoville, New York, 2015

L'Orient LE JOUR

Allan Sekula
L'Orient-Le-Jour
July 11th, 2017
by Gilles Khoury

Allan Sekula, une œuvre-gage et engagée au Beirut Art Center

Parcours commenté par Marie Muracciole des œuvres-manifestes de ce photographe conceptuel, réalisateur et théoricien, attaché à l'univers marin, au monde du travail et au mouvement altermondialiste.

Gilles KHOURY

Il y a, dans la vie et l'œuvre d'Allan Sekula, dont une rétrospective remarquablement bien ficelée occupe les locaux du Beirut Art Center jusqu'au 29 septembre, une photo cruciale. Pas une « belle » photo, au sens le plus universel du terme, ni un cliché emblématique du travail de ce photographe américain dont l'empreinte a évolué vers une esthétique plus revêche et moins estompée. Juste la vision embrouillée, assez brumeuse, de son père se déplaçant dans leur maison de San Pedro en Californie. La silhouette de l'homme cravaté et dont la tête a été coupée du cadrage est griffée d'un meuble assez mastoc qui semble presque la dévorer. On ne le voit presque pas. Ce qu'on discerne, en revanche, c'est le presque fantôme d'un récent chômeur qui rôde comme une âme en peine dans cet espace calfeutré. Si cette image est déterminante, c'est parce que la situation qui la sous-tend (la perte d'emploi du père) est celle qui balisera les premiers pas et intérêts artistiques de Sekula. Elle fait partie de la section sur laquelle s'ouvre cette exposition et qui regroupe des éléments de la série « Aerospace Folktales » à travers laquelle l'Américain place sous le microscope de son objectif la situation bancale que subit sa famille.

Narration et mise en scène

Marie Muracciole, directrice du BAC et curatrice de l'exposition, commente cette première tranche de l'œuvre d'Allan Sekula : « Il y écrit les phénomènes qui mettent en place le monde où nous vivons aujourd'hui : l'exportation du travail, les progrès du chômage, la naissance d'une économie de la spéculation financière pour remplacer celle de la production et les disparités du monde global qui conduisent aux immenses mouvement de migration actuels. » Imbibée de l'impulsion de John Baldessari, sa pratique photographique se greffe spontanément sur le genre de l'époque, à savoir la performance. Les clichés servent alors à documenter les actions artistico-politiques. C'est le cas du slide show *Untitled Sequence* 1 qui se ralentit jusqu'à l'arrêt, avec les tirages du même titre, et où Sekula documente la sortie d'une usine américaine. Ainsi, à la fois, il (s')interroge (sur) le monde du travail et soigne la narration, pareillement à *California Series* qui rassemble des scénarios mi-grivois et mi-obscurs qu'il monte de toutes pièces en Californie, coïncidant avec une ère où Jean-Luc Godard et Jean-Pierre Gorin règnent en maîtres marxiens de ce stylisme de l'image.

> C'était l'homme le plus distrait et le plus cool possible, mais son travail prouve qu'il était extrêmement précis, presque maniaque

Critique et esthétique

Ainsi, tout au long de l'exposition – pourvu qu'on accompagne sa visite de la lecture attentive des documents procurés par le BAC et des projections filmées (*Talk Given by Fred Lux* et *The Lottery Of The Sea*) – va s'opérer un va-et-vient, non seulement entre les différents médiums proposés mais entre plusieurs registres a priori antithétiques, tels que le noir & blanc charbonneux des pictogrammes de *School is a factory* contre l'intensité iodée des couleurs de *Titanic's Wake* qui sert de réflexion, à travers le texte et l'image, sur le capitalisme mondialisé et la métaphore maritime, illustrée par la « navigation » sur internet, le film *Titanic* ou le musée Guggenheim de Bilbao. Mais aussi sur le photoreportage contre la photo d'art, le documentaire contre la fiction et, englobant l'ensemble, la critique contre l'esthétique. Selon Marie Muracciole – pour qui cette rétrospective tenait particulièrement à cœur car, confie-t-elle, « Allan était un ami. C'était l'homme le plus distrait et le plus cool possible, mais son travail prouve qu'il était extrêmement précis, presque maniaque. Allan était brillant mais pas très narcissique, la seule chose qui l'intéressait était de comprendre le monde en regardant autour de lui, et en mettant les images en relation entre elles et avec du texte » –, le fil rouge de l'œuvre de Sekula, longtemps sous-estimée, est le fait qu'il « défendait l'idée que la photographie est un outil de description insuffisant à décrire entièrement ce qu'elle montre. Son œuvre revendique la dépendance de l'image à l'égard de son contexte. C'est une position très forte, très actuelle et qui oblige à penser aux évolutions du monde face à ce que nous voyons. L'actualité de ce travail, c'est qu'il nous fait expérimenter les dichotomies constantes entre ce que nous voyons et ce que nous savons », explique-t-elle. Cette distanciation décapante que mentionne la curatrice, on la retrouve notamment sur les deux volets de *Fish Story* qui semblent échafauder l'imaginaire d'une invitation au voyage – qui n'est pas sans rappeler les accents marins de *Vingt Mille Lieues sous les mers*, de *Moby Dick* ou d'*Oceano Nox* – pour mieux nous faire basculer dans ce que cette série vise réellement : une dénonciation du capitalisme globalisé, des chantiers navals et des chaînes de production qui ont changé le visage du commerce international.

Nul doute, donc, qu'à l'image d'*Europa* sur laquelle se referme la rétrospective, cette photo saisissante d'un quasi-spectre qui dort dans un aéroport, sans valise, l'œuvre d'Allan Sekula contient encore quelques messages secrets qu'on continuera à décoder avec délectation.

*** BEIRUT ART CENTER**
Allan Sekula : Photography at work
Jusqu'au 29 septembre 2017



Marie Muracciole : Allan Sekula défendait l'idée que la photographie est un outil de description insuffisant à décrire entièrement ce qu'elle montre.

Le choix de la curatrice

Marie Muracciole, directrice du Beirut Art Center et curatrice de la rétrospective consacrée à Allan Sekula, a choisi trois œuvres qu'elle a commentées pour « L'Orient-Le Jour ».

« Fish Story – Chapter 8 : Dismal Science », 1989-92



Allan Sekula, « Fish Story, Chapter 9 : Walking on Water », 1989-1995. Projection de slides.
Photo Baris Dogrusöz

De 1989 à 1995, Allan Sekula parcourt le globe en bateau pour explorer le monde maritime, un voyage qui donnera naissance à un livre et un cycle de 9 chapitres consacré aux géographies imaginaires et matérielles du capitalisme avancé. Fish Story décrit la mer comme le théâtre principal et sous-estimé, car quasi invisible, de l'économie globalisée. Nous montrons côte à côte, au BAC, Dismal Science, une série de 80 diapositives sur l'Angleterre ; *Walking on Water*, le chapitre 9, qui se déroule en Pologne, mais le visiteur peut aussi consulter le livre, dont les textes sont fabuleux. Le film Lottery of the Sea, est projeté deux fois par jour et le 11 septembre, *The Forgotten Space* sera présenté au cinéma Métropolis, Achrafieh.

« Untitled Slide Sequence », 1972-2011



Allan Sekula, « Untitled Slide Sequence », 1972-2011.

Il s'agit de la sortie d'une usine d'aéronautique de la côte ouest des États-Unis en 1972. Allan Sekula a photographié des gens qui rentrent chez eux après une journée de travail. La séquence de 25 diapositives, lointain écho de La sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon (filmé en 1895) est la définition minimum d'un film muet. En 2011, Sekula en réalise une série de tirages papiers : le mouvement s'est ralenti, arrêté. Entre-temps, beaucoup d'usines ont fermé. La singularité de ces portraits provient du fait que les photographies de Sekula ne nous font jamais oublier la réalité qui les a produites, et qu'elles ne l'oublient pas non plus. C'est ce qui rend aussi, plus globalement, son travail tellement saisissant.

« School is a Factory », 1978-1980



Allan Sekula, « School is a Factory », 1978-1980. 10 photos en noir et blanc. Courtesy FRAC Centre.
Photo Baris Dogrusöz

Ce récit mis en scène, un peu comme un roman-photo, parle des fonctions normatives de l'école où l'on apprend à accepter la place que la société nous accorde. La première image est un photomontage : sur fond de paysage déshumanisé, des mains d'homme brandissent une maquette d'école posée sur un entonnoir rempli de figurines qui vont se conformer à un programme. L'humour est noir et les photographies parlent de la résistance des individus à leur assimilation à des catégories sociales où ils peuvent disparaître. La photographie est porteuse d'un imaginaire collectif, elle est donc bien placée pour nous apporter une distance critique sur ses effets.

The Columbus Dispatch

Allan Sekula
The colombus Dispatch
June 17th, 2017
by Peter Tonguette

Family setbacks central focus of 'Aerospace Folktales'



Artist Allan Sekula found his earliest inspiration close to home.

A Pennsylvania native who grew up in California, Sekula — who died in 2013 at age 62 — launched his professional career with the mixed-media work "Aerospace Folktales."

Using 142 photographs combined with audio and text elements, the ambitious piece chronicles the trials and tribulations experienced by Sekula's family — especially his father, Ignace, and his mother, Evelyn — in the early 1970s.

The work was created in the wake of Ignace losing his job as an aerospace engineer in the Burbank plant of the Lockheed Corp. (now Lockheed Martin).

It serves as the centerpiece of a larger exhibit of Sekula's art — "Allan Sekula: Aerospace Folktales and Other Stories" — on view through July 2 at the Columbus Museum of Art.

According to curator Drew Sawyer, Sekula (who from 1980 to 1985 taught at Ohio State University) referred to the work as a "disassembled movie."

"Cinema and film were important throughout his practice," Sawyer said.

The piece might also be said to resemble a dismantled flip book: Running horizontally across the four walls of a museum gallery is a thin strip of photographs, positioned at eye level. Like frame enlargements from a movie, a particular scene or activity is frequently depicted throughout the course of several photographs seemingly taken moments apart.

For example, one set of images shows a group of enthusiastic workers (presumably employees of Lockheed) on their own and then mingling with military brass; another set depicts Ignace in profile, grimacing behind the wheel of a car.

The photographs present a powerful study in contrasts: Ignace was a member of a profession associated with flight and forward thinking, but his unemployment brought his family crashing to Earth.

By the time the work was completed in 1973, Sawyer said, "His dad had been unemployed for quite some time, so you can see they're now living in a small apartment in San Pedro."



Several photographs show Ignace and Evelyn standing in front of a row of garages in their apartment complex; another group — prefaced by a "title card" reading, "In the evening, the engineer would write letters and straighten the lamps" — show Ignace laboring at a small desk barely illuminated by inadequate lamps.

What is he writing? Job applications?

Echoes of Ignace's former life are found in photographs of model planes hanging from a ceiling and rows upon rows of books; in one image, the volume "The Effects of Nuclear Weapons" is posed beside editions of "Grimm's Fairy Tales."

Playing continuously in the gallery are audio recordings of Sekula interviewing Ignace, Evelyn and a family friend; although focusing on their voices while scrutinizing the images is difficult, the audio ultimately enriches the piece.

"It becomes deeply personal and very specific," Sawyer said. "With the images, we might imagine what these individuals sound like and what they think, but with the audio we really get a chance to know what they're actually thinking."

Several of Sekula's slide-show and video works are also included in the exhibit; the most striking is "Untitled Slide Sequence" (1972), in which 35-mm slides depict workers and management marching wearily out of an aerospace factory.

More superficial (and dated) is "Reagan Tape," a video created in 1981 by Sekula and Noel Burch. Footage of Ronald Reagan as president is juxtaposed with innocuous examples of his work as an actor; even in the clips shown here, however, Reagan displays his lasting appeal as an actor — presumably not what the creators had in mind.

ARTFORUM

Allan Sekula
Artforum
March 13th, 2017

Getty Institute Acquires Allan Sekula Archive



Los Angeles's Getty Institute announced that it has acquired the Allan Sekula papers, ca. 1960–2013, comprising four hundred boxes of correspondences, illustrations, photographs, notebooks, and research materials that highlight his practice as an artist, writer, filmmaker, and critic. The institute is currently processing and cataloguing the collection.

An American documentary photographer, Sekula was heavily influenced by Conceptual art, postmodernism, and the history of photography. He often combined modes of photography, cinema, and literature, and addressed the impact of globalization in his works. Sekula served as a professor at the California Institute of the Arts from 1985 until his death in 2013. He was a prolific writer, and his essays were featured in a number of publications, including *Artforum*. His first book, *Photography Against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works 1973–83* (1984), impacted the way in which the documentary function of photography was conceptualized. Sekula was the recipient of various fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment of the Arts, the Getty Research Institute, and the Deutsche Akademischer Austauschdienst, among others.

In a recent Critics' Pick on artforum.com, Andy Campbell discussed an exhibition of Sekula's works at Los Angeles's Christopher Grimes Gallery. Noting the artist's interests in photographic deconstruction and Marxist ideas about labor, Campbell writes: "The photographs, like the text, swing wildly between moments of hilarious hamming and more caustic critique."

frieze

Allan Sekula
Frieze
December 15th, 2016
by Laurie Taylor



Photography Against the Grain

The re-release of Allan Sekula's seminal book critiquing the bond between capitalism and representations of material culture

BY LAURIE TAYLOR

Photography has always been characterized by a vacillation between extremes: between subjectivity and objectivity, truth and artifice, information and aesthetic. More than any other, photography is a medium of contrasting forces and it was this oppositional nature that so interested the American photographer, writer, filmmaker and critic Allan Sekula, whose seminal, but long out-of-print collection, *Photography Against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works 1973-1983*, has recently been reconstructed and re-issued by MACK.



Allan Sekula, from the series 'Aerospace Folktales', 1973. Courtesy: MACK © Allan Sekula 2016

Originally published in 1984 by an independent art school publisher, Nova Scotia College of Art & Design, the first edition was unsurprisingly small and sold out quickly. A second edition had always been intended, but Sekula's numerous other exhibitions, essays and books (in addition to teaching at California Institute of the Arts), got in the way and he died in 2013 without ever seeing the re-release of one of one of his most well-known publications.

An important voice in photography's postmodern discourse, Sekula combined photography with conceptualism and Marxist commentary to create his own brand of critically engaged art and writing, much of which features in this new collection. The book's first half is devoted to his early written works and included are texts such as, 'On the Invention of Photographic Meaning' (1974) and 'The Traffic in Photographs' (1981). The former compares the styles of social documentarians like Lewis Hine with anti-utilitarian, aesthetes like Alfred Stieglitz, while the latter concerns itself with the literal traffic of photography's production, consumption and circulation – essential reading for anyone interested in photographic history and theory.



Allan Sekula, from the series 'School is a Factory', 1980. Courtesy: MACK © Allan Sekula 2016

Sekula's early photographic projects make up the book's second half. The pioneering work, 'Aerospace Folktales' (1973) was the first in which the artist employed his characteristic format of photographic sequences with accompanying texts. When it was first exhibited at University of California at San Diego, this 'dismantled film' included a spoken sound track, 142 photographic prints and a written narrative about the American aerospace company, Lockheed. However, as reproduced for the page, the original sound track has been abridged and turned into text and many photographic sequences have been shortened. Other photo projects such as 'This Ain't China: A Photonovel' (1974) and 'School is a Factory' (1980) have suffered similar fates. Like 'Aerospace Folktales', these works were also originally staged as exhibitions and have been modified in the move from gallery wall to printed publication. Although an introductory note attempts to assure readers that all original integrity has been maintained, without seeing the exhibitions, it is impossible to know how these alterations may have affected meaning. Despite this minor criticism, what the photo works do reveal is Sekula's interest in photography's ability to function in ensemble and to be read as narrative. Individual photographs are often underwhelming – a factory exterior, an engineer working by lamplight, a classroom of computing students – but when taken together and combined with the explanatory texts, these black and white images become powerful social critiques on the economic machinations at work in capitalist societies.



Allan Sekula, from the series 'School is a Factory', 1980. Courtesy: MACK © Allan Sekula 2016

Sekula's photo works do not sit comfortably in photography's fine art tradition where the sanctity and aesthetic authority of the singular 'fine print' rule, but nor do they accurately reflect the documentary tradition where the best photographs speak without words. By presenting individual prints in series and introducing language into a visual medium, Sekula harnessed the power of oppositional forces and created a photography that truly moved, as the book's title suggests, against the grain.

Allan Sekula, *Photography Against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works, 1973–1983* is published by **MACK <http://www.mackbooks.co.uk>**

Main image courtesy: MACK © Allan Sekula 2016

BLOUINARTINFO

Allan Sekula
Blouin Art Info
July 14, 2015 - Online
By Rachel Will

"A Fish Story" Tells Tale of Global Maritime History at NTU CCA Singapore



Allan Sekula

Hammerhead crane unloading forty-foot containers from Asian ports

© The Estate of Allan Sekula

Before automotive and air travel, oceans were the major transit infrastructures of the world, fundamental to the development of modern trade and shipping practices. Photographer, theorist, historian, and critic Allan Sekula (1951-2013) dedicated his research to the examination and documentation of the maritime world, what he argued is the "forgotten space" of the contemporary global economy.

Currently on view at NTU CCA Singapore are Sekula's core works presented in a restrospective exhibition titled "Fish Story, to be continued."

The three-part exhibition includes chapters from his ambitious project "Fish Story" (1988-1993), his video essay "Lottery of the Sea" (2006), and his last film "The Forgotten Space" (2010) co-directed by American film theorist Noel Burch. His key project, "Fish Story," is a five-year passion project that covers topics as diverse as California's abandoned harbors and the Atlantic slave trade in an effort to tell the history of the global maritime industry.

The works as a whole aim to combat the maritime world's reputation of "anachronism and obsolescence," with Sekula arguing instead that the maritime industry was fundamental to late modernity. His works document the rise of the cargo container and how the invention revolutionized the world economy. Using photography, essay, and video Sekula attempts to reconfigure our visual language of globalization.

The exhibition creates a network of connections between major port cities of the world including New York, Rotterdam, and Hong Kong. With its showing in Singapore, another major port city, the maritime history of Southeast Asia is considered through this thought provoking body of work.

TODAY

Allan Sekula
Today
July 4, 2015 - online
By Mayo Martin

Allan Sekula's ports of call



A still of an empty cargo ship from Allan Sekula and Noel Burch's film...

The late artist and activist Allan Sekula's exhibition resonates with Singapore's identity as a port city

SINGAPORE – As Singapore marches towards its 50th anniversary celebrations, many art-related showcases have looked at various facets of the Republic's identity. Not much, however, has been said of its roots as a port city. Here, the NTU Centre For Contemporary Art (NTU CCA) Singapore has jumped into the ongoing conversation, albeit in an indirect way.

While the late American photographer and activist Allan Sekula did not visit Singapore, an exhibition of his works, collectively called Fish Story, To Be Continued, resonates in the Singaporean context. Sekula, who passed away in 2013 at 62, had been preoccupied with the global maritime industry and the stories behind the world's ports and harbours. The exhibition offers a glimpse into these, comprising selections of photographs from his five-year project from the late 1980s and early 1990s titled Fish Story, as well as two slightly more current video works titled Lottery Of The Sea and The Forgotten Space.

It is an intriguing world, to be sure. In his oldest project Fish Story, which was also published as a book, Sekula travelled to different ports, including those in Los Angeles, New York, Rotterdam, South Korea and Hong Kong. The photographs reveal many of these places in various states of decline and abandonment as a result of a rapidly-changing globalised world.

Sekula's photography work — coupled with his critical writings — have been instrumental in highlighting photography as an important social tool, said Anca Rujoiu, the exhibition's co-curator along with NTU CCA director Ute Meta Bauer. But not, she emphasised, in the direction of photojournalism, which treasured objectivity and the so-called truths. It was subjectivity of a more progressive kind.

This is seen in Sekula's gritty portrayal of the maritime industry. While ports and harbours in Asia boomed thanks to brisk industrialisation, the traditional functions of many of the ports in the Western world disappeared and were replaced by tourism, said Rujoiu. One of the most famous examples was the so-called Bilbao Effect, where the famous Spanish port city transitioned into a cultural hub thanks to the construction of the Guggenheim Museum there, which effectively changed its image and identity. In the exhibition, one photo of a port in Los Angeles also alludes to its transformation into a site where Hollywood movies were shot.

Elsewhere, Sekula refers to the so-called triangular slave trade route between Europe, Africa and the New World (aka the Americas), which is still pretty much in use today. "Maritime trade is an important part of colonial history and, in fact, started it," said Rujoiu.

There is nothing abstract about Sekula's interests in the seas — his works highlight the plight of peoples that have become invisible. For example, in one photograph, a sign in Thai is found in one of the ports in the United States, a subtle commentary on the global network of workers whose livelihoods are tied to ships. Elsewhere, this global labour force surfaces, from Filipinos working in ships or as maids in Hong Kong to Korean labourers working in shipyards. Questions arise, too, of human labour being pushed aside in the name of progress, with technology taking over the role of workers.

But there are also timely reminders of how this supposedly faceless masses are powerful agents of change: One part of Fish Story focuses on Poland, where the anti-Communist Solidarity freedom movement had sprung up in a shipyard — and, its leader (and future Polish President) Lech Walesa had, in fact, been an electrician working there.

While Singapore's own port may be less exciting, it is still undoubtedly part of this global network of trade routes and you can definitely find certain issues in Sekula's exhibition resonating close to home: Singapore's new arts-and-entertainment hub image looks suspiciously like the Bilbao Effect taking place and, in the broader region, the geopolitical bickering among China, Vietnam, the Philippines and the United States revolving around who controls the seas is, no doubt, related to issues of maritime trade.

You could also say the exhibition has a direct connection to Singapore arts too as Sekula's original Fish Story had been exhibited at the prestigious Documenta contemporary art event in 2002, where Singaporean artist Charles Lim had also exhibited under his collective tsunamii.net. Lim, of course, is one of the few local artists whose practice expounds on Singapore's relationship with the sea. This was evident in his work SEA STATE, which was presented at this year's Venice Biennale and of which a new version is reportedly coming to NTU CCA in April next year.

It would certainly have been interesting to see both exhibitions side by side, but in themselves, Sekula's works already offer much food for thought. After all, while 90 per cent of the world's goods reportedly pass through the world's seas and oceans (many of which pass through Singapore), these are still fairly uncharted territories in the public imagination compared to how anything related to the skies easily grabs headlines.

Bauer pointed out that ships would sink frequently and, barring oil spill incidents, such news would barely cause a ripple in conversations — a stark contrast to the buzz generated by every aeroplane accident. "The air is favoured over the oceans," she said.

In this light, Sekula's fishy tale remains relevant as it brings the unknown to the surface.

AMA
Art Media Agency

Allan Sekula
Art Media Agency
June 23, 2015 - Online

Allan Sekula at NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore

From 3 July until 27 September 2015, the NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore is to host an exhibition entitled "Fish Story, to be continued", bringing together a set of important works realised by the American artist, photographer, theorist, and photography historian, Allan Sekula, to be displayed for the first time in Southeast Asia.

The exhibition will juxtapose three key parts of Sekula's artistic project: Fish Story (1988-93), his video Lottery of the Sea (2006), and his latest film The Forgotten Space (2010), which he co-directed with American film theoretician Noël Burch. These works underline Sekula's interest in the maritime world, which is, according to him, "a forgotten space" within the international economy of today. Fish Story, the central project of the exhibition, was created over a period of five years and blurs the boundaries between academic essay, photography, and socio-historical research. Its first chapter, Fish Story, depicts travels towards distant foreign ports, with a focus on the transformation of Californian port areas. The third chapter, Middle Passage, refers to the triangular trade in the Atlantic Ocean, in which millions of African slaves were shipped to the colonies in the New World. The video Lottery of the Sea is a geopolitical investigation of contemporary maritime life structured in three travels from Japan, Panama, and Spain, whilst The Forgotten Space, through a critical investigation of international capitalism, represents the key players in the international economy, from lorry drivers in Los Angeles, to workers in China and migrant Filipino workers. These two films are part of a larger research project dealing with the international shipping trade, in which Allan Sekula was involved for the last 20 years of his artistic life.

"Fish Story, to be continued" also includes works from the collections of the Fond Régional d'art contemporain Bretagne, Rennes; MoMA, New York; and the Thyssen Bornemisza Art Contemporary (TBA 21), Vienna, and is to be completed with a varied programme of events and conferences highlighting the complexities of a world in constant change, as well as of local and international networks.

ARTFORUM

Allan Sekula
Art Forum
October, 2014 - Numero 54 - Page 287
By Daniel Marcus

LOS ANGELES

Allan Sekula

CHRISTOPHER GRIMES GALLERY

Measured in anxious days and weeks, the slow pace of shipping once served as a reminder that commodities, although seemingly self-generated, are nevertheless the products of labor, including that of transportation. However, with the advent of containerization, dockside automation, and networked logistics, the figure of the transportation worker is increasingly supplanted by an algorithm—or worse, by a drone. While these innovations have driven down the cost of shipping, they have also made supply chains more vulnerable to interruption: It was no fluke, for example, that Occupy Oakland demonstrators, when evicted from their encampment by riot police, retaliated by blockading the Port of Oakland beside rank-and-file dockworkers, proclaiming the action the equivalent of a general strike.

This intersection of anticapitalist tactics and thalassic profiteering was prefigured by artist Allan Sekula, who saw the heavy traffic of the sea, conveniently overlooked by paladins of the "New Economy" of the 1990s, underlying the visible, digital superstructure of e-commerce. Although Sekula passed away in 2013, his final traveling project, *Ship of Fools*, 1999–2010, continues to circle the globe. This body of work dates to the year when the artist first encountered the *Global Mariner*, a onetime cargo ship that had been repurposed by the International Transport Workers' Federation (an umbrella organization of maritime labor unions) as a floating exhibition platform dedicated to the history of modern shipping—and, in particular, to the industry's exploitative labor conditions. Traveling with the *Mariner* during several legs of its two-year circumnavigation, Sekula trained his camera on the web of relationships (social, economic, personal, geographic) set in motion by the vessel, beginning with the crew—a team of antiglobalization activists and maritime unionists—and expanding outward into the docklands of Cyprus, South Africa, California, and beyond.

The iteration of *Ship of Fools* shown at Christopher Grimes Gallery centered on Sekula's portraits of maritime labor, which continue his longstanding interrogation of the conventions of photographic realism. In the six-photograph sequence *Sugar Gang 1–6*, 2010, the artist tracked a crew of dockworkers as they hoist a heavy sack of sugar; these photographs portray a workflow governed not by computer (the port has not yet been automated), but by a system of hand signals, shouts, and facial expressions. The gaps in the sequence, as well as the copious spilled sugar, suggest other kinds of relays (of information, affection, attention, etc.) extraneous to the circulation of capital. Sekula might have taken his cue from Gustave Courbet, whose paintings of workers—especially his *Stone Breakers*, 1849–50—violated the genre's indexical code, figuring the laborer without figuring the labor. Likewise for Sekula: Although the title of *Crew, pilot, and Russian girlfriend (Novorossisk) 1–10*, 1999–2010, implies a taxonomic ordering of the ship's staff, each of these portraits is resolutely singular. Three women seafarers embrace; an elderly worker stands patiently, his hands slack at his sides. What emerges from these photographs is less an image of labor than a portrait of people who, for reasons unknown, have contracted to perform "under working conditions" (a phrase that recurs in Sekula's oeuvre, from his 1973 video *Performance Under Working Conditions* to his retrospective of the same title at the Generali Foundation in Vienna in 2003).

For Sekula, who grew up within hailing distance of the Port of Los Angeles and Long Beach, the sea was a source of interruption and disappearance; its vectorial openness—to commodity flows, but also to human cargo—is the unacknowledged subject of his magisterial essay video *The Lottery of the Sea*, 2006, an excerpt of which was screened as part of this exhibition. In one segment of the film, a Galician transport worker, reflecting on the Spanish government's mismanagement of an oil spill, admits that seafarers always have an exit route: "A sailor always survives. It's unusual to see a sailor starve. Because if they don't get paid here, they pick up their things and go to South Africa, or another sea." This lesson cuts deep: To forget the sea is to ignore capitalism's brightest lure, its promise of flight and fortune-seeking. There would be no commodity fetish without the secrets of circumnavigation; the shoreline is simultaneously the origin and the destination of cargo cults. Likewise, to resist under these conditions requires a sailor's aptitude for solidarity: Better a ship of fools than no ship at all.

—*Daniel Marcus*



Allan Sekula, *Sugar Gang 1–6*, 2010, six C-prints, each 31½ × 31½".

AMA
Art Media Agency

Allan Sekula
AMA Newsletter
March, 06, 2014, N°142, Page 9

ACQUISITIONS..

Le MOCA annonce ses acquisitions de 2013

Le MOCA a annoncé l'acquisition de trente et une œuvres pour compléter ses collections permanentes riches de 6.800 travaux artistiques.

Parmi les dons figurent une édition limitée d'un portfolio de douze tirages photographiques, dont *The Family* (2006) de Marina Abramovic, *Untitled* (2006) de Shirin Neshat et *B-52 Crater / Whisper* (2006) d'Allan Sekula. Par ailleurs, parmi les achats du MOCA, il est possible de citer *Desire for Zero Gravity, March 7 2012* (2012) de Cai Guo-Qiang ; *Representation of a Landscape as a Wall* (2012) de Rodney McMillian et *Diet Piece : Moral Kinship* (2013) de Samara Golden.

Ces dons et acquisitions sont issus de l'action du comité des acquisitions et des collections, ainsi que de celui des photographies et dessins, mais aussi de dons d'artistes et d'autres donateurs. Plusieurs de ces œuvres ont été présentées lors d'expositions récentes au MOCA.

ARTFORUM

Allan Sekula
Artforum
January 2014
By Benjamin H. D.

Allan Sekula

Allan Sekula

1951–2013

BENJAMIN H. D. BUCHLOH

A TRUE UNDERSTANDING of the tragic early loss of Allan Sekula may emerge only slowly in American culture, but it will steadily expand beyond the relatively limited circles in which his work has until now been recognized. He will be celebrated as an artist, first of all, and as a photographer and one of the most important critics, historians, and theoreticians of photography of the final decades of the twentieth century. (His 1986 essay "The Body and the Archive" is on par with Siegfried Kracauer's foundational "*Die Photographie*," which, although written nearly sixty years earlier in a profoundly different cultural context, was crucial to Sekula's formation.) Then, he will be lauded as a filmmaker, for his extraordinary 2010 documentary *The Forgotten Space*, perhaps his greatest accomplishment, conceived and produced in collaboration with Noël Burch; lastly—and perhaps most important to him—he will be remembered as an activist and public intellectual.

If we understand why Sekula's work had been largely ignored if not excluded, almost up to his death, by those institutions that supposedly represent American visual culture (i.e., museums, alternative spaces, and galleries), we have once more come up against the increasingly limited purview of our official cultural system—a system that may indeed no longer merit the generous imputation of "repressive tolerance," a term coined by Herbert Marcuse, who was one of Sekula's early philosophical teachers. The very criteria of this exclusion give us an astonishing insight, underscoring the fact that total depoliticization appears to be the precondition of cultural recognition (as Hans Haacke, another figure formative in Sekula's education as an artist, could attest). Bertolt Brecht as a writer in Hollywood in the 1940s and Sekula as an artist in the American art world at the turn of the twenty-first century might well lend themselves for comparison.

It is hardly surprising that Sekula's photographic practices generated such an intense hostility of indifference. After all, one experienced a reciprocal response from him—even, or particularly, as a friend—if one was, and remained, deeply attached to the histories of painting and sculpture or even to Conceptualist practices that, beginning in the late 1960s, foregrounded the linguistic status of the work of art. For Sekula, the historical transition from painting, sculpture, and Conceptualism to photography as a social production of representation and critical reflection was not merely a shift of media or genres that would eventually replace painting by adopting its own obsolete means of figuration and narrative. Rather, this transition defined one of the most crucial dimensions of his radicality as an artist (in the same manner in which photography as a deeply antipictorial project in the context of the Soviet and the Surrealist avant-gardes had once transformed advanced critical culture in the mid-1920s).

For one of his very first works, *Gallery Voice Montage*, 1970, Sekula recorded the commentaries voiced by spectators in front of paintings by Andy Warhol; he then played back these dialogic responses, through speakers installed in two white monochrome canvases, verifying what or whether anything was actually popular in Pop art. *Meat Mass*, 1972, another early work, no less cruel in its clear-sighted analysis of things to come, was a performance in which the artist redistributed high-priced steaks, illicitly acquired from a supermarket, by throwing them onto the San Diego Freeway, the monstrous meats inevitably to be flattened by the endless stream of cars and trucks. What must have appeared at the time as an utterly implausible mapping of unrelated elements (LA traffic and meat consumption) in an enigmatic performance reads now, with forty years' hindsight, as an uncanny literalization, alerting us to the deep connection between ecological destruction and socially enforced compulsive consumption.

Sekula reminded us that, from the very beginning, photography had provided as many new means of surveillance and seduction as it had representations of potential agency—if not more.

Early on, Sekula was profoundly knowledgeable about the photographic practices and debates of the 1920s and '30s (during which Kracauer had called photography the "go for broke—*va banque*—game of history"), whether Farm Security Administration documentary or John Heartfield's photomontages, the factographic photography of the Soviet Union or August Sander's long-term project *Menschen des 20. Jahrhunderts* (People of the Twentieth Century), 1910–1950s. (Sekula often mentioned Sander and had planned to devote a monographic essay to his work, which now, unfortunately, we will never read.) While Sekula was well aware that the cultural upheavals of the late 1960s had irrevocably transformed the historical dialectics at stake in the recovery of this material, the





Left: **Allan Sekula, *Meat Mass* (details), 1972,** eleven gelatin silver prints, text on paper: eight photographs, each approx. 6½ x 9¼"; three photographs, each approx. 7⅝ x 9¼"; text 5 x 8". Below: **Noël Burch and Allan Sekula, *The Forgotten Space*, 2010,** digital video, color and black-and-white, sound, 110 minutes.

PASSAGES



Allan Sekula, *Aerospace Folktales* (detail), 1973. fifty-one gelatin silver prints, three director's chairs, six potted plants, sound, dimensions variable.

artist—like photography's critics and practitioners of the '20s and '30s—aimed to reinstate the medium's centrality in critically reflecting and representing the conditions of collective experience in the remnants of the bourgeois public sphere.

If such political commitments distanced Sekula, as we have seen, from the Minimalist painters, sculptors, and language-based Conceptualists ascendant in the years of his artistic apprenticeship, no less of a gap separated him from those Los Angeles artists such as Ed Ruscha, John Baldessari, and Douglas Huebler who, after Warhol's impact, had returned the photographic medium to artistic, if not yet to critical or political, reflection. And what distinguished Sekula's aesthetic from those of his now-famous artistic peers in the mid- to late-1970s moment of post-Conceptual photographic practices (say, Cindy Sherman's or Jeff Wall's) was first of all his desire to reconstruct photography's dialectical tension between discursive and documentary dimensions. His resolve to resurrect photography's historically innate referentiality not only ran counter to all the rules that had been formulated in the '60s by both poststructuralist (e.g., Roland Barthes) and post-Duchampian (e.g., Conceptual photography, Pictures) projects but also brushed "photography against the grain," the Benjaminian title Sekula gave to his first book of writings and works, published in 1984 by the Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

Given Sekula's allegiance to photography's inextricable and inescapable referential functions, be they historically overdetermined or semiologically or phenomenologically grounded, it is unsurprising that one of his very first photographic works, *Aerospace Folktales*, 1973, concerned labor and the family structure, precisely the two most unacceptable spheres of everyday life in terms of artistic representation—ones that had been almost phobically avoided throughout the history of twentieth-century modernism. After all, what could possibly have been less appealing to the art-world audience of the '70s—at the very moment of art's seemingly radical detachment from all referential functions (think of Jean Baudrillard's analysis of the "floating signifier" and its Pop art reverberations, for example)—than an artist telling us the story of his father being laid off from his job at a major military-industrial conglomerate in Southern California and the resulting family crisis?

Referentiality itself, however, was always thought of by Sekula in dialectical terms. To reestablish and renegotiate photography's bonds with material and social reality was both a promise and a plight, since it meant first of all to reconstruct photography's initial project of producing visual evidence of the social processes within which subjects are formed, molded by class, labor, and education no less than by linguistic representations and perceptual genres and conventions (undoubtedly one of the reasons Sander remained of particular interest to the artist). Even when Sekula rethought photography's initial promise to serve as a tool, and at times even as a weapon, of emancipation and self-constitution, reclaiming the agency and activism of social documentary, he always counteracted that utopian radicality with the realist's pessimism of the intellect. In his incomparably precise analyses of what had come of photography's originary Enlightenment claims (when writing on Oliver Wendell Holmes or Edward Steichen, for example), he reminded us that, from the very beginning, photography had provided as many new means of surveillance and seduction as it had representations of potential agency—if not more. Photography, like language—here was the lesson Sekula had learned from Foucault—was the very system within which subjects are both constituted and subjected to ideological control, typically in the service of economic exploitation.

That insight also served as a riposte to Conceptualism's linguistic optimism, a countermove in which Sekula restituted material and social visuality to artistic production and representation; but rather than sell off large-scale photographs as quaint and compensatory pictorial stories, he imbued even photography's precarious status with that of the *dispositif*, the mechanisms of ideological control, in a mode of critical self-reflection on which was founded his initially unlikely but increasingly deep friendship with the late Michael Asher, whom we lost not even a year before Sekula's departure.

But despite his relentless self-questioning, Sekula's optimism of the will remained true to his initial strategies, focusing on representations of labor and the labor of representation (with respect to the social collective as much as to his own role and place as an artist) as one of his central subjects, in which precarious self-constitution and enforced alienation are always dialectically at work. It seems that Sekula had understood early on that simulated *détournement* and the bliss and mess of free-floating signifiers had had their historical play and had lost the game; therefore, he refused to follow the directions that neoliberal capitalism gave to its cultural producers. Rather, he focused increasingly on the conditions of production under globalization, mostly concealed from, or disavowed by, those who enjoy the comforts of Westernized consumption. Sekula and Burch's chef d'oeuvre, *The Forgotten Space*, reestablishes solidarity with those condemned to extreme forms of globalized alienated labor, a solidarity that documentary film and photography had always attempted to sustain. But it also irreversibly dismantles the delusions that artistic practices can still credibly claim to provide brief moments of compensatory reprieve or even amusement, let alone perceptual or cognitive enlightenment, unless they themselves engage the actual complexity with which ideological deception operates in the present and deconstruct capital's monolithic myths with the attention to context and detail necessary to provide theoretical and critical illumination.

One of the last, and one of the most striking, photographs that I have seen by Sekula is a portrait of his aging mother, who died in her early nineties, a week after her son. Again, unthinkable as an image or a reflection in postwar visual (least of all photographic) culture, the portrait reminds us of the multiple motivations and tasks of critical realism and referentiality, in a history that ranges from Käthe Kollwitz to Aleksandr Rodchenko to Brecht and beyond. And it is out of that neglected tradition that Sekula's early commitment to feminism arose, and from which evolved his increasingly passionate commitment to publicly record and criticize the collective indifference toward capitalism's destruction of the environment.

We all owe Allan Sekula immensely and have a great deal of work to do (editorial, critical, historical, and artistic) if we are to honor his spirit and courage and extend his activist legacies into the present—and into an otherwise ever-darkening future of cultural futilities. □

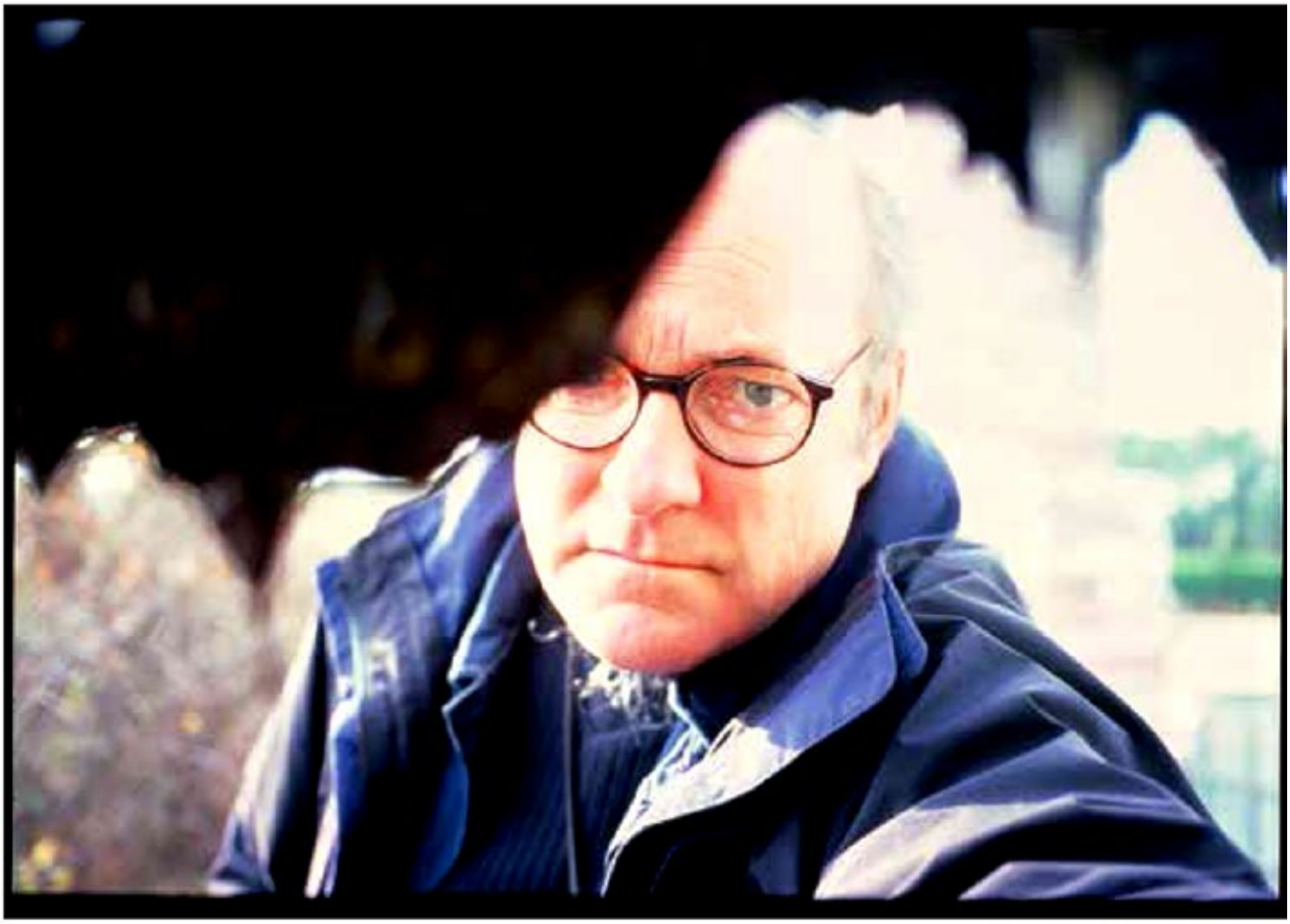
Allan Sekula died on August 10, 2013, at the age of sixty-two.

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TEXTE ZUR KUNST

Alla Sekula
Text zur Kunst
October 13th, 2013
by Edward Dimendberg

REMEMBERING ALLAN SEKULA (1951–2013)



Allan Sekula, Self-Portrait (Lendo, 12/22/02). From "Black Tide/Marea Negra," 2002–03, film still

Allan Sekula – artist, photographer, filmmaker, teacher, scholar, critic, public intellectual, and activist – died in Los Angeles on August 10, 2013, the only person I have known who could juggle as many roles with style and comfort. Most artists and scholars find one topic or problem and spend their lives exploring it. The truly lucky might discover two. Allan found many, and over the arc of his astonishingly productive career he systematically explored their interconnections, such that by the time of his death he had made significant contributions to the theorization of photography, the reconceptualization of documentary, the history of physiognomy and surveillance practices, the visual analysis of Southern California, and the study of the sea, shipping, and ports in the contemporary global economy.

Making art, photographs, and films informed the research that generated his theoretical investigations, just as writing was central to his politically committed art. Today as many artists opt for these forms of engagement, albeit rarely with Allan's piercing wit, erudition, and artistic talent, it is instructive to recall the lasting impact of his earliest writings. The three articles that he published in *Artforum* in 1975, when he was a mere

24, "On the Invention of Photographic Meaning", "Paparazzo Notes", and "The Instrumental Image: Steichen at War", catalyzed study in the United States of the political and social implications of photography and galvanized a generation of artists, teachers, and students.

Appearing in the years following the journal Afterimage, founded by photographer Nathan Lyons in 1972, and the 1973 publication by Susan Sontag of her book "On Photography", these writings fused his deep knowledge of earlier modernisms (the films of Dziga Vertov and Sergei Eisenstein; the photographers of the Weimar German Neue Sachlichkeit; the writings of Walter Benjamin, Bertolt Brecht, and Roland Barthes; New Deal era photography and films) into a distinctive critical voice, at once minutely aware of earlier histories, yet suffused by a smoldering analytical rage and a dry humor quite unlike anything else one could encounter at the time (or frequently since) when reading about photography.

Pierre Bourdieu suggested that cultural and intellectual fields be studied as shifting interactions between what he called stances, intellectual or theoretical belief systems; and positions, the social or economic capital that accrue to their proponents. Debates about the aesthetics of photography appear early in the history of the medium, yet Allan was among the first to map such stances in relation to institutional, curatorial, and critical positions – the grubby world of money, museums, galleries, and reputation making – and demonstrate how the construction of art photography as an object entailed a systematic disavowal of political realities and alternative practices of image making. When in 1975 art critic Hilton Kramer published a take-no-prisoners critique of *Artforum* in *The New York Times*, he singled out Allan's article on Steichen for particular opprobrium.

Allan lived in remarkable times and places alongside equally remarkable people, beginning with his childhood in the port town of San Pedro, California, where he developed his fascination with the sea and became acquainted with Stan Weir, a labor activist and blue collar intellectual. He studied at the University of California, San Diego, where he received his MFA in 1974, at a high point in the public higher education system of the University of California, of which he was a product. The faculty at UCSD included David and Eleanor Antin, Newton Harrison, Manny Farber, Herbert Marcuse, and Arthur Danto. Allan's colleagues were the artists Martha Rosler, Fred Lonidier, and Phel Steinmetz.

Teaching briefly in the Department of Cinema Studies at New York University, he participated in the New York art community in the late 1970s when it still was centered in Soho and the reception of structuralism and semiotics was in full swing. While in New York, Allan met Sally Stein, a photographer and scholar of photography, who became his collaborator, wife, and most significant interlocutor for four decades. From 1980 to 1985, he taught at Ohio State University, where he met film scholar Noël Burch, with whom he later would make the film "The Forgotten Space" (2010). When Allan wore a Ronald Reagan mask on campus, the university administrators were not amused, and in 1985 he moved to Los Angeles and joined the faculty of the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, where his colleagues included John Baldessari, Michael Asher, Hartmut Bitomsky, Lorraine Wild, James Benning, Thom Andersen, Thomas Lawson, and Catherine Lord.

The time during the early 1980s that Allan

and Sally spent at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax, alongside Hans Haacke and many of the liveliest and most politically engaged artists and scholars of the period, culminated in Allan's 1984 book, "Photography against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works 1973–1983", published in the influential Source Materials of the Contemporary Arts series edited by Benjamin H. D. Buchloh. Elegantly dissecting the pretense of the photograph as an objective record and notions of artistic signature and liberal humanist reveries of universal communication, the essays in the book, especially the 1981 "The Traffic in Photographs", transformed understandings of documentary, as his best-known text "The Body and the Archive" (1986) would later spur research into photographic documentation of deviance as an instrument of state power and control.

Allan's lifelong commitment to Marxist political economy (in matters of strategy he leaned more toward anarchism) was evident in his theoretical argumentation that related photography to the commodity form and in his photo works that focused upon him and his family, now living in San Diego, where his father worked as an engineer at a ship plant. The five photo works in the book, the best known of which are "Aerospace Folktales" and "This Ain't China: A Photonovel", studied labor and the fabric of everyday life in Southern California.

They were laboratories in which to explore relations between texts and images and Allan's conception of photographic meaning as context dependent and heavily inflected by verbal language. Refusing to understand photography as thoroughly severed from the world, Allan sought to remake realism, and the interplay of photographs, captions, narratives, quotations, and found graphics in these projects expanded the connections of any single image to the world, frequently by introducing references to other photographs and artworks.

Central to these photo works was the investigation of sequentiality and temporality. Many were exhibited in gallery spaces through the use of dual slide projectors, a strategy that suggests cinema as a connecting thread throughout Allan's work, the medium that perhaps most inspired his own response to Walter Benjamin's dictum to introduce the montage principle into history. Wary of what he memorably phrased "the dictatorship of the projector", Allan made films whose narrative progression and logic disrupted expectations and carved out a distinctive space between the genres of documentary and the essay film. "Tsukiji", a 2005 study of the Tokyo Fish Market, would prefigure two other explorations in moving images of global maritime space, "The Lottery of the Sea" (2006) and "The Forgotten Space" (2010).

Some of Allan's most memorable images appeared in his epic 2002 "Fish Story", whose title underscores the wry humor and self-deprecating manner that permeated his work. The cargo container, a linchpin of the global economy that he was among the first to document in photography and film, was perhaps his greatest trouvaille as an artist. Simultaneously real in its movements, yet abstract in its geometric form and solid colors, it provided a perfect means with which to make global capital visible. Frank Gehry's architecture, in which Allan discerned the apotheosis of a tendency toward spectacle and deflecting an honest engagement with social, political, and urban conditions, furnished another key subject matter for him; one that he and fellow Los Angeles art-

ists would explore in the 2005 "Facing the Music" exhibition that he curated in the Cal Arts Redcat Gallery located in Gehry's Disney Concert Hall.

I first met Allan and Sally when I moved to Los Angeles in 1990. Over the next 23 years their friendship inspired and delighted me. To view a film or an exhibition with them meant plunging into an impassioned discussion from which it was impossible not to learn. Sending Allan an email about the study by C.L.R. James on "Moby Dick" and receiving his impassioned recommendation of it was nearly as much fun as making him a gift of an obscure book about the seamans' union photographed by a member of the Photo League. His intellectual curiosity and appetite for ideas, art, and politics were as limitless as his capacity to enjoy life and converse with anyone about anything.

Attending the recent memorial event for Allan after his death from gastric-esophageal cancer, I was struck by the dozens of students, colleagues, and friends from around the world who spoke for four and a half hours about his kindness and the difference he made in their lives and their art.[1] He had become much more than California artist and was an active participant in cultural and political struggles that spanned the globe, especially admired in Europe, where a network of collaborators, curators, museums, gallerists, critics, film festivals, and foundations supported his work.

Visiting New York in September, I was moved to see "Fish Story" installed in an exhibition of recent acquisitions in the Museum of Modern Art. After years of criticizing the canons of the Department of Photography of the Museum, Allan had finally arrived in the belly of the whale, Jonah in the inner sanctum of modernism. The receptivity of the Museum to a wider range of photography than at earlier moments in its history, some of which today includes investigations of labor and globalization, surely must have pleased Allan as much as the realization that his own life and work played a key role in bringing this change about.

EDWARD DIMENDBERG

Note

1 The memorial can be viewed online at: http://new.livestream.com/calartsofficial/AllanSekula.

ice
istanbulcontemporaryetc

Allan Sekula
Istanbul Contemporary Etc
Semptember 11th, 2013 - pp. 56-59
by Murat Germen

Allan Sekula ve 'Balık Hikayesi'

Allan Sekula and the 'Fish Story'

Murat Germen

Allan Sekula'nın "Dismal Science: Part 1. Middle Passage. Panorama. Mid-Atlantic. Kasım 1993" adlı eseri, yolda olmanın verdiği özgürlük hissi ile kapitalizmin güç ve kontrol sevdası arasında gidip gelen bir ruh halini aktarmak ister gibidir.

Part 1. Middle Passage. Panorama. Mid-Atlantic. November 1993' seems like it is trying to convey a mood alternating between the feeling of freedom given by being on the road and passion of power and control found in capitalism.

Bazı eserler ilk görüşte insanı aniden etkilerler ve hafızaya çakılı kalırlar, unutmazsınız. Son zamanlardaki görüntü bolluğunu hesaba katarsak, hafızalarda çakılı kalabilen imgelerin içeriksel ve/veya estetik düzlemlerde başarılı olduklarını varsayabiliriz. Allan Sekula'nın "Dismal Science: Part 1. Middle Passage. Panorama. Mid-Atlantic, Kasım 1993" adlı eseri benim için böyle bir eser. Sanatçının 1988 ve 1994 yılları arasında New York, New Jersey, Rotterdam, Los Angeles, Hong Kong, Seul, Barselona, Gdansk, Glasgow, Londra, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Pusan, San Diego, Ulsan, Veracruz, Vigo ve Varşova gibi kentlerin endüstriyel limanlarında gerçekleştirdiği "Fish Story" başlıklı çalışma ve araştırma; bu kentlerin tarihî, sosyopolitik, estetik ve edebî bağlantılarını küresel ölçekte keşfetmek üzere düşünülmüş.

Çalışma kapsamındaki büyük sergiye dahil edilen bu fotoğrafın, benim bu derece ilgimi çekmesinin iki nedeni olduğunu sanıyorum. Birincisi İstanbul Modern'de 2010 yılında açtığım "Yol" adlı sergi (ki yazının sonuna doğru kavram metninden alıntı yapacağım), diğeri ise şu an artık mevcut olmayan Garanti Galeri'de 2005 yılında açtığım "İkon olarak endüstri: Endüstriyel estetik" adlı sergi. Bu sergi için Harem'deki limana girmiş, orada fotoğraf çekmiş, konteyner yığınlarının ve yükleme kolaylığı için aralarında bırakılan boşlukların oluşturduğu kent suretinden çok hoşlanmıştım. Burada çektiğim fotoğrafları en kısa zamanda sergilemeyi planlamakla birlikte, halen bir esere dönüştürmüş değilim fakat herhangi bir yerde konteyner gördüğümde bu kendine has dünyaya ilişkin heyecanım depreşiyor. Sekula'nın bu eserini gördüğümde heyecan duymamın ve belleğime unutmamacasına yerleştirmemin önemli nedenlerinden birisi bu olmalı.
Fotoğrafa tekrar bakıyorum: Açık deniz ortasında seyreden bir gemi söz konusu ve konteynerler hiç de karada durdukları gibi "yerleşik, sağlam" durmuyorlar, hatta gayet "emanet" bir halleri var. İlerideki bulutlar güçlü

Some works influence you immediately at first sight and stay imprinted on your memory, you cannot forget about them. Taking the recent abundance of images into account, we can reckon the images leaving an indelible imprint on memories as succesful ones in terms of content and/or aesthetics. In my opinion, Allan Sekula's work "Dismal Science: Part 1. Middle Passage. Panorama. Mid-Atlantic. November 1993" is such a work for me. The work and survey titled "Fish Story" conducted by the artist between 1988 and 1994 in the industrial harbors of cities such as New York, New Jersey, Rotterdam, Los Angeles, Hong Kong, Seul, Barcelona, Gdansk, Glasgow, London, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Pusan, San Diego, Ulsan, Veracruz, Vigo and Warsaw aims discovering the historical, socio-political, aesthetical and literary connections among these cities on a global scale.

This photo which has been involved in the big exhibition as part of the work has considerably took my attention. I assume that there are two reasons behind this. One of them is the exhibition of mine titled "Road", held at İstanbul Modern in 2010 (I am going to include a citation from the conceptual text of the exhibition towards the end of this article), and the other one is my exhibition titled "Industry as an icon: Industrial aesthetics" held at Garanti Gallery, which does not exist any more, in 2005. I went into the harbor in Harem for this exhibition, took photos; I liked the city appearance created by the bulks of containers and the aisles left for the ease of loading. While planning to display those photos as soon as possible, I haven't been able to turn them into a work yet. Yet, whenever I encounter a container somewhere, my enthusiasm towards this sui generis world is triggered. This must have been one of the reasons why I feel excited when I see this work of Sekula and make it imprinted on my mind.



Dismal Science: Part 1. Middle Passage. Panorama.
Mid-Atlantic, Kasım / November 1993, From the series, Fish Story serisinden

bir fırtınanın haberini veriyor gibiler ve bunun yarattığı bir tedirginlik söz konusu. "Gemi yüksek dalgalarla karşılaşırsa konteynerler düşer mi, onun da ötesinde gemi batar mı?" gibi olası soruların yarattığı bir tekinsizlik hissi var. Bu safhada Sekula'nın bu çalışma ile ne gibi bir kavramsal çerçeve çizdiğini anlamaya çalışmakta fayda var. Çeşitli malların, paranın, bilginin ve gücün küresel değişimi ve hareketi kapsamında, Sekula; panoramik deniz manzaraları, denizcilik cihaz ve taşıtlarının yakın plan görüntüleri, kargo konteynerleri, ambarlar, yelkenciler ve tersane işçilerini kaydetmiş. Gelişmiş kapitalist dünyanın coğrafyalarında süregiden seyahatlerde çekilmiş bu fotoğrafa bakarken "gemi batarsa kapitalizm de batar mı?" gibi eleştirel bir soru geliyor kulağıma derinlerden.
Öte yandan, Sekula'nın olağana bir güzelleme yapmayı amaçladığı da söylenebilir. Küresel ekonominin işleyiş süreci içinde bu yolculuklar rutin sayılan gündelik olaylarken; sanatçının bunu bize aktarım biçim, bağlam ve herkese nasip olmayacak kişisel tanıklığı bunu özel, biricik bir olay haline getirmeye yetiyor. Olağana güzelleme şahsen çok ilgi duyduğum

I'm looking at the photo once more: A boat cruising in the open sea and the containers are not looking "settled and sturdy" as they looked on the land at all; instead, they look rather "escrowed". The clouds we see beyond are seemingly messengers of a powerful storm and there is tension in the air caused by the upcoming storm. There is a feeling of uncanny caused by the questions such as "If the boat runs into extreme waves, will the containers fall or which is worse, will the boat sink down?" At this stage, it would be beneficial to make an effort to understand what kind of a conceptual framework Sekula constructs through this work. In the scope of the global exchange and movement of various goods, money, knowledge and power, Sekula recorded panoramic sea views, close shots of marine devices and vessels, cargo containers, warehouses, sailmen and dockers. While looking at this photo which was taken during ongoing cruises in the geography of developed capitalist world, a critical question such as "Will capitalism also sink down when the boat sinks down?" comes to my mind from afar.

bir yönlenme, bu yüzden sanatçı beyanımın belli bir bölümünü bu tavır oluşturuyor. Olağana odaklanıp, onun alışagelinmiş algısını değiştirerek yeni bir idrak önermek bu tavrın merkezine oturuyor. Buradan tekrar endüstriye atlamak gerekirse, sanayi yapılarında bulacağımız ve anonim bir boyut taşıyan kendine has makine estetiğinin de Sekula'nın ilgisini çektiğini düşünüyorum. Benzer mecralarda dolaşan konstrüktivist anlayışa bağı ise Lawrence Rinder çok isabetli bir şekilde kuruyor: "Hem stilistik hem de tematik olarak Sekula'nın işlerinde; Sergey Eisenstein'ın, Rus Devrimi esnasında bahriyedeki ayaklanmayı konu edindiği 1925 tarihli klasiği 'Potemkin Zırhlısı' filmindeki öyküsel ve şiirsel görselliğin yansımasını görmek olası."

Sanatçının kendisi ise işlerine dair şu sözleri sarf ediyor: "... Gilles Deleuze; Amerikalı yazar Herman Melville'in Moby Dick adlı romanında tasvir ettiği anlamda bir 'gemi'nin; düzen ve düzensizliğin, kontrol ve kaosun buluşma noktası olduğunu öne sürer. Sistemsel olarak bakıldığında, gemi bir düzen, bir kap numunesidir. Görüngübilimsel boyutta ise gemi bir labirent, ürkütücü bir cinnet vesilesi, klostrofobi, körlük ve boğulmadır. İlk tahayyül kaptanınkidir, sonraki de mürettebatın. Ancak kaptan da bir insandır ve kendisi kaosa sürüklenmeye meyilliyken, mürettebat da ayaklanarak müştereken özerk bir yapıya yükselme eğilimi içinde olabilir. O halde, gemi hem kendi içine kapanmış mekânsız bir heterotopik uzam, hem de aynı zamanda denizin sonsuzluğuna teslim olmuş rekabetçi bir güç aracı, bir savaş makinesidir."

1970'lerden bu yana Sekula, belgeci fotoğrafın herhangi bir ideolojik ithaf olmadan gerçeği yansıtıyor olduğu iddialarına en çok karşı çıkanlardan birisi oldu. Post-strüktüralist ve post-modernist teorilerin etkisini göz ardı etmeyen fotoğrafçı, belgeci fotoğrafın mucizevi gerçeklik vaadini, "naif görenekçilik" olarak adlandırdı. Fotoğrafın özündeki anlamın ancak çeşitli sunum ve kullanım bağlamları çerçevesinde değerlendirilebileceğini öne sürdü. Gerçekçiliği geçersiz bir yaklaşım olarak gördü.

On the other hand, it could be inferred that Sekula aimed at praising "the ordinary". While these journeys are daily incidents considered routine within the proceeding process of the global economy; the way that the artist conveys this to us, the context, and his personal witnessing turns it into a special, unique incident. Praising the ordinary is a tendency in which I'm personally quite interested; that's why a particular part of my artistic manifestation is made up of this attitude. Offering a new comprehension by focusing on the ordinary and changing its usual perception is at the centre of this attitude. If it is necessary to jump to industry again, I think Sekula is interested in the partially anonymous and sui generis machine aesthetics that we can find in the industrial structures. Lawrence Rinder quite incisively links it to the constructivist understanding which wander around similar media: "In Sekula's works, it's possible to see both stylistically and thematically the reflection of narrative and poetic visuality found in the 1925 production classic movie "Battleship Potemkin" by Sergey Eisenstein, which tells the story of the riot in the navy during the Russian Revolution."

The artist mentions his works as follows: "... Gilles Deleuze puts forward that a 'boat' in the sense described by American author Herman Melville in Moby Dick is a meeting point of order and disorder, control and chaos. Examining systematically, boat is a sample of order, a container. However, considering phenomenologically, boat is a labyrinth, a creepy reason for amok, claustrophobia, blindness and drowning. Former imagination is the one of the captain, the later is the one of the crew. However, the captain is also a human being and while he tends to be dragged into the chaos, the crew might also be in a predisposition towards rising up to a jointly autonomous structure by staging a revolt. This being the case, the boat is both a heterotypical space without location, retired into its own shell and a competitive means of power, a war machine which surrendered in to the infinity of the sea."
Sekula has been one of the people who opposed to the claims that documentarist photography reflects reality without any ideological



Still from The Forgotten Space, 2010

Çağdaş fotoğrafa yön veren mihenk taşlarından birisi olarak değerlendirebileceğimiz Allan Sekula'nın "Dismal Science: Part 1. Middle Passage. Panorama. Mid-Atlantic. Kasım 1993" adlı eseri şüphesiz ki turistik bir yolculuğu belgelemez. Yolda olmanın verdiği özgürlük hissi ile kapitalizmin güç ve kontrol sevdası arasında gidip gelen bir ruh halini aktarmak ister gibidir. Yazıyı bitirirken, "Yol" sergisi konsept metninden alıntı yaparak süreci daha olumlu bir yere taşımak istiyorum: "Şimdiye kadarki yaşamımda beni en çok rahatsız eden konulardan biri; insanın her daim mevcut konumunu, yaşam biçimini, politik görüşünü, ait olduğu çeşitli grupları bir makam ve tahakküm aracı olarak kullanması oldu. Azınlık konumunda olanların bile, haklı bir mücadele sonrasında gücü ellerine geçirdiklerinde, mağrur ve bağımsız azınlıklar olarak kalmayı tercih etmek yerine, ellerindeki güçle yetinmeyip çoğunluk olmayı arzuladıklarını gördüm sıklıkla; insanların sistemleri yıkmak istemelerinin tek nedeninin kendi sistemlerini inşa etmek olduğunu gördüm hayal kırıklığı ile. Bağımsız kalmayı tercih eden bireylerin ise asilikle, aksilikle, dik başlılıkla suçlandığını tecrübe ettim. Yolda olmak beni bu yükten, sıkıntıdan, cendereden, sınıflandırmadan kurtarır; bağımsız hissetmenin en etkin, heyecan verici, keyifli, devingen yoludur yolda olmak…

Yol bize bulmayı öğretir ya da bulduğumuzu sandığımızdan kurtulabilmeyi. Yola çıkmadıkça bulma, kurtulma şansımız daha az olur; hayatı değiştirebilecek rastlantılar ancak yoldayken karşımıza çıkar. Yoldayken bulduklarımızla yola çıkmadan önce yapılan planlar değişebilir, bu yüzden de yol aslında yürürken oluşur. Yolunu gözlediğiniz çıkar yolu keşfetmenin yollarından biri yola çıkmaktır…"

Kaynaklar:

- Allan Sekula, "War Without Bodies," Artforum, Kasım 1991, s. 107.
- Hilda van Gelder ve diğer., "A Debate on Critical Realism Today", 2006, s. 125.
- https://smmoa.org/programs-and-exhibitions/allan-sekula-fish-story/
- http://www.wdw.nl/event/allan-sekula-fish-story/
- http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/production-view-allan-sekulas-fish-story-and-thawing-postmodernism

attribution. Not ignoring the influence of the post-structuralist and post-modernist theories, the photographer renamed the miraculous promise of reality by the documentarist photography as "naive conventionalism". He suggestted that the essential meaning of the photography can only be evaluated within the frameworks of various presentation and utilisation contexts. He considered realism an invalid approach.

Who can be considered one of the benchmarks of contemporary photography, Allan Sekula's work titled "Dismal Science: Part 1. Middle Passage. Panorama. Mid-Atlantic. November 1993" does not provide evidence for a touristical journey, undoubtedly. It seems like it is trying to convey a mood alternating between the feeling of freedom given by being on the road and passion of power and control found in capitalism. While ending my article, I would like to carry the process into a more positive status by quoting a passage from the conceptual text of the show "Road": "One of the issues that has most disturbed me in my life so far is people's always using their status, life style, political opinion and the various groups they belong to as a means of position and domination. I've often seen that even the ones in the position of minority, gaining power after a rightful struggle, long for being majority instead of settling for the power in their hands and preferring to stay as independent minorities. I've been disappointed upon seeing that the reason behind people's wish to demolish the system is to build up their own system. I've experienced that people preferring to stay independent have been accused of being rebellious, ill-tempered and stubborn. Being on the road sets me free from this burden, boredom, pressure, classification; being on the road is the most active, exciting, jolly, dynamic way of feeling independent...

The road teaches us either to find or to get rid of the ones we think we have found. We have a slighter chance of finding or getting rid of unless we take the road; we come across coincidences that will change our lives only on the road. The plans we make before taking the road can change upon the ones we find on the road; that's why the road comes into being while we're walking on it. One of the ways of discovering the 'way out' you've been waiting for is taking the road..."

References:

- Allan Sekula, "War Without Bodies," Artforum, November 1991, page 107.
- Hilda van Gelder etc., "A Debate on Critical Realism Today", 2006, page 125.
- https://smmoa.org/programs-and-exhibitions/allan-sekula-fish-story/
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Allan Sekula
Camera Austria
September, 2013
by Christine Frisinghelli



Nachruf / Obituary*

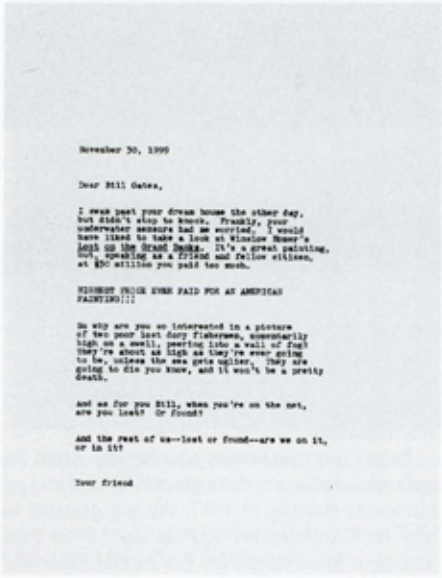
Allan Sekula, 1951 – 2013

von / by Christine Frisinghelli

In der Nacht vom 10. auf den 11. August 2013 ist der Fotograf, Theoretiker, Fotohistoriker, Essayist und Filmemacher Allan Sekula in Los Angeles gestorben. Allan Sekula wurde am 15. Jänner 1951 in Erie, Pennsylvania, geboren. Er studierte an der Universität San Diego und graduierte dort 1974. Seine fotografische Praxis entwickelt Sekula in seinen frühen performativen Arbeiten – »Meat Mass« (1972) und »This Ain't China. A Photonovel« (1974). Diese Arbeiten, wie auch die seiner eigenen Familie, der Arbeitslosigkeit seines Vaters und der Rolle seiner Mutter in der Arbeitsteilung zwischen Mann und Frau gewidmete Arbeit »Aerospace Folktales« (1973), werden in Form von Bildsequenzen, Dia-Projektionen, mit Interviews oder einführenden Texten als »extended documentary« präsentiert. Sekula beschreibt diese Arbeitsweise oft auch als »disassembled movies«, eine Form, die er in seinem künstlerischen Werk weiter entwickeln und überzeugend einsetzen wird.

Die Beziehung zwischen Wort und Bild in der Form einer Ausstellungspräsentation und in Buchform zu bewältigen, ist eines der wesentlichen Merkmale seiner Arbeit; gleichzeitig herausfordernd wie beispielgebend für mehr als eine Generation von FotografInnen. »Ein Problem ist die schwankende Stellung der Fotografie innerhalb der Spätmoderne, in der sie einen nicht klar definierten Raum zwischen Malerei, Literatur und Filmkunst einnimmt. Die Vielfalt der Präsentationsformen in meiner Arbeit – Galerie, Lesezimmer, Projektionsraum – soll der Ambiguität dieser schwankenden institutionellen Nicht-Position, vom Markt ständig in Richtung Malerei gedrängt, Rechnung tragen.«[1]

Insbesondere Sekulas Hauptwerk der letzten Jahrzehnte, »Fish Story«, an dem er seit 1988 arbeitet und das er 1995 als Ausstellung und Buch präsentieren wird (und zu dem er mit Camera



November 30, 1999

Dear Bill Gates,

I read past your dream house the other day, but didn't stop to knock. Frankly, your underwater sensors had me worried. I would have liked to take a look at Winslow Homer's work on the Grand Banks. It's a great painting, but, speaking as a friend and fellow citizen, at $50 million you paid too much.

NINEBOOT (MICH EVER PAID FOR AN AMERICAN PAINTING)!!!

So why are you so interested in a picture of two poor lost dory fishermen, understandably high on a swell, peering into a wall of fog? They're about as high as they're ever going to be, unless the sea gets uglier. They are going to die you know, and it won't be a pretty death.

And as for you Bill, when you're on the net, are you lost? Or found?

And the rest of us--lost or found--are we on it, or in it?

Your friend

Allan Sekula, Dear Bill Gates, 1999. C-print and letter; letter: 30.5 × 22.8 cm (unframed).** Courtesy: Christopher Grimes Gallery, Santa Monica / Michel Rein, Paris.

Austria 1996 ein Symposion konzipiert hat) und das in zahlreichen Hafenstädten weltweit in immer neuer, auf den Ort bezogener Anordnung ausgestellt wird, kann als überzeugende Neuformulierung sozialdokumentarischer Fotografie bezeichnet werden. Aus diesem Forschungsschwerpunkt Sekulas sind zahlreiche weitere Ausstellungs- und Buchprojekte – darunter »TITANIC's wake« (2001; als Buch 2003 in der Edition Camera Austria erschienen), »Ship of Fools« (2010), »Docker's Museum« (2012) wie auch seine Filme »Tsukiji« (2001), »The Lottery of the Sea« (2006) und der 2010 in Zusammenarbeit mit Noël Burch entstandene Film »The Forgotten Space« hervorgegangen.

Sekulas multidisziplinäre künstlerische Arbeit, die sich in der Verwendung von Fotografie, Film und Text als erweiterte dokumentarische Praxis zeigt, wie seine wegweisenden Essays haben die Debatte über Fotografie, über die Repräsentation des Ökonomischen, Politischen und Sozialen im aktuellen Kunst- und Gesellschaftsdiskurs tiefgehend und bleibend verändert. Wenn Sekula in seiner künstlerischen, historischen und theoretischen Arbeit den Effekten globaler wirtschaftlicher Entwicklungen auf der Spur ist, so liegt sein Augenmerk doch vor allem darauf, diese oft abstrakten oder gar unsichtbaren Vorgänge an der konkreten Erfahrung derjenigen sichtbar zu machen, die den globalen Warenfluss in Gang halten, denn, wie es in der Einleitung zu seiner 1999 in der Zeit der Proteste gegen das WTO-Forum in Seattle entstandenen Arbeit »Waiting for Tear Gas« heißt: »Schließlich waren es die in den Docks arbeitenden Männer und Frauen, die den Strom der Container aus Asien unterbrachen – gestützt auf das persönliche Wissen, dass auf der anderen Seite des Meeres immer ein anderer Körper steht, der dieselbe Arbeit verrichtet, dass der gesamte globale Handel nicht nur die Sache eines Mausklicks ist.«[2]

Haben Allan Sekulas kritische theoretische und historische Beiträge sehr rasch den Diskurs geprägt, so ist seine bildkünstlerische Arbeit (vor allem in den Vereinigten Staaten) institutionell anfangs eher zögerlich akzeptiert worden. Er selbst hat auch zu keiner Zeit einen Hehl daraus gemacht, dass es für ihn nicht von Relevanz ist, ob Fotografie nun Kunststatus erreicht oder nicht. »Weit interessanter sind die Bescheidenheit dieses Mediums und die durch Konzentration auf genaues, beharrliches Beobachten mögliche radikale Erkenntnis. Darin bestehen, grob skizziert, die philosophischen Grundlagen für die Behauptung einer speziellen Eignung der Fotografie zur Abbildung ökonomischen Geschehens, einst ›das Dokumentarische‹ genannt.«[3]

Wir hatten das Privileg, Allan Sekulas Arbeit seit 1987 in Ausstellungen und Publikationen immer wieder zu begleiten. Wir danken ihm für die Großzügigkeit, mit der er sein unerschöpfliches Wissen teilte, für seine Bescheidenheit und die nie nachlassende Aufmerksamkeit, die jede Begegnung und die Arbeit mit ihm so besonders machten, und für seine Freundschaft.

During the night from 10 to 11 August 2013, the photographer, theorist, photography historian, essayist, and film-maker Allan Sekula passed away in Los Angeles. He was born on 15 January 1951 in Erie, Pennsylvania, and attended the University of San Diego, graduating in 1974. Sekula developed his photographic practice in his early performative works "Meat Mass" (1972) and "This Ain't China: A Photonovel" (1974). These two pieces along with "Aerospace Folktales"—which shows his own family, his father's state of unemployment, and the role of his mother in the division of labour between man and woman—were presented as an "extended documentary" in the form of image sequences or slide projections, featuring interviews or introductory texts. Sekula frequently called this working approach "disassembled movies", a form that he was to further develop and convincingly apply in his artistic oeuvre.

Addressing the relationship between word and image in the context of an exhibition presentation and in book form is one of the distinguishing marks of his work—and it has proven to be both a challenge and an example for more than one generation of photographers. "One problem is the floating position of photography within the late modern system of the arts. Photography occupies a somewhat indeterminate zone between painting, literature and the cinema. The variety of presentational modes I have used—the picture gallery, the reading room, and the projection room—are intended to accommodate the ambiguities of that floating institutional non-position, which is always being pushed by market pressures in the unilateral direction of painting."[1]

Especially Sekula's main work of recent decades can be considered a persuasive reinvention of social-documentary photography: he started to work on "Fish Story" in 1988 and presented it as exhibition and book in 1995 (conceptually developing a symposium on this topic together with Camera Austria in 1996), before it went on to be shown internationally in various harbour cities with ever new site-specific constellations. Numerous other exhibition and book projects evolved from this research focus that Sekula pursued, including "TITANIC's wake" (2001, published as a book in 2003 in the Edition Camera Austria), "Ship of Fools" (2010), and "Docker's Museum" (2012), as well as his films "Tsukiji" (2001), "The Lottery of the Sea" (2006), and "The Forgotten Space" (2010), with the latter created in collaboration with Noël Burch.

Sekula's multidisciplinary artistic work—an extended documentary practice, as apparent in his use of photography, film, and text—and his groundbreaking essays have profoundly and abidingly altered discourse on photography and on the representation of economic, political, and social issues in current discussions about art and society. When Sekula was on the trail of the effects of global economic development in his artistic, historical, and theoretical works, his attention was primarily aimed at making visible processes that are frequently abstract or even invisible. He accomplished this by tying into the concrete experiences of those who keep the global flow of goods rolling. As he noted in the introduction to his 1999 work "Waiting for Tear Gas", created during the period of demonstrations against the WTO forum in Seattle: "It was the men and women who work on the docks, after all, who shut down the flow of metal boxes from Asia, relying on individual knowledge that there is always another body on the other side of the sea doing the same work, that all this global trade is more than a matter of a mouse-click."[2]

While Allan Sekula's critical theoretical and historical contributions were quick to influence discourse, his work in the visual arts (especially in the United States) was initially accepted with hesitance. The artist himself never made a secret of his stance that it is irrelevant whether or not photography attains the status of art. "What is much more interesting is the modesty of this medium, and the radical wisdom that follows from close and sustained attention to observation. This then, is a schematic philosophic argument for photography's special aptitude for depicting economic life, for what used to be called 'documentary'."[3]

It was our pleasure to accompany Allan Sekula time and again through exhibitions and publications starting in 1987. We are grateful to him for the generous way he shared his inexhaustible knowledge, for his humbleness and the never-waning attentiveness that made each encounter and all work with him so special, and for his friendship.



Allan Sekula, Dear Bill Gates, 1999. C-print and letter; triptych: 71.1 × 261.6 cm. Courtesy: Christopher Grimes Gallery, Santa Monica / Michel Rein, Paris.

1 Allan Sekula, "On 'Fish Story': The Coffin Learns To Dance", Camera Austria International 59–60 (1997), S. / pp. 49–69, S. / p. 57.

2 "Waiting for Tear Gas: White Globe to Black", eighty-one-part slide sequence and introductory text, 1999–2000.

3 Cf. Fußnote 1, S. 52 / footnote 1, pp. 51–52.

** November 30, 1999.—Dear Bill Gates,—I swam past your dream house the other day, but didn't stop to knock. Frankly, your underwater sensors had me worried. I would have liked to take a look at Winslow Homer's Lost on the Grand Banks. It's a great painting, but, speaking as a friend and fellow citizen, at $30 million you paid too much,—HIGHEST PRICE EVER PAID FOR AN AMERICAN PAINTING!!!—So why are you so interested in a picture of two poor lost dory fishermen, momentarily high on a swell, peering into a wall of fog? They're about as high as they're ever going to be, unless the sea gets uglier. They are going to die you know, and it won't be a pretty death.—And as for you Bill, when you're on the net, are you lost? Or found?—And the rest of us—lost or found—are we on it, or in it?—Your friend.

LE QUOTIDIEN DE L'ART
THE ART DAILY NEWS

Alla Sekula
Le Quotiden de l'art
May 7th, 2012
by Julie Portier

Les travailleurs de la mer

PAR JULIE PORTIER

Depuis les années 1970, le photographe, essayiste et théoricien américain Allan Sekula pointe son objectif sur les réalités économiques et sociales produites par le système capitaliste avancé. En conjuguant la production d'images et de récits, il réactive la forme documentaire, élaborant une méthode de connaissance du réel depuis un médium dont il s'est emparé comme d'une arme de résistance. À partir du milieu des années 1980, sa mise au jour des refoulés du consumérisme s'est tournée vers la mer, cet espace oublié d'une modernité focalisée sur les échanges dématérialisés (The Forgotten Space du titre de son dernier film réalisé en collaboration avec Noël Burch), qui est pourtant le pivot du système de production à échelle planétaire. Oublié aussi du spectacle médiatique et du sensationnel cinématographique (dont Sekula dévoile les sordides coulisses de tournages dans son livre « Titanic's Wake », paru en 2003 aux éditions du Point du Jour), la mer est le théâtre le plus réaliste de l'exploitation illégale de la main-d'œuvre et de la mort banalisée. Sur les murs de La Criée à Rennes, à hauteur de genoux de sorte qu'il faille se pencher pour la lire, Sekula rapporte cette phrase glaçante d'un quartier-maître écossais : « Chaque année, il y a autant de morts en mer qu'à bord du Titanic, mais personne n'en parle ».

Mémorial d'un monde occulté, « The Docker's Museum » fait donc escale au centre d'art rennais. Y sont présentés des « objets d'intérêt » liés au monde marin que l'artiste collecte assidûment depuis plusieurs années via des sites de ventes en ligne, en regard des photographies dont la pièce majeure est une série de portraits de l'équipage du Global Mariner. Ce cargo, sur lequel a embarqué Sekula pour un tour du monde, a été aménagé en 1998 pour recevoir dans sa cale une exposition mettant en garde les marins contre le système des pavillons de complaisance (qui permet aux armateurs de contourner la loi en achetant leur immatriculation à des nations pauvres). Dans une savante dialectique entre les objets cristallisant un imaginaire lointain et acquis en un clic, et, au mur, le témoignage objectif d'un monde lent et laborieux, naît la conscience d'une profonde méconnaissance de cette réalité. Ce temps étiré, nécessaire à la manœuvre des cargaisons, feint d'être décrit image par image dans le saisissant polyptyque issu de la série Sugar Gang, offrant un précieux terrain d'observation (des gestes, des attitudes, des techniques), mais mettant déjà en doute la capacité de la photographie à rendre compte du réel.

> « Chaque année, il y a autant de morts en mer qu'à bord du Titanic, mais personne n'en parle »



Allan Sekula, From Sugar Gang (Santos) , 2010, série de 6, épreuve chromogène issue de « Ship of Fools » (1999/2010).
© Allan Sekula. Courtesy Galerie Michel Rein, Paris.

La démarche a aussi conscience de ses limites quand elle érige le portrait de ces travailleurs essentiels et inconnus, venus prendre le flash sur le pont du bateau dans une pose mal à l'aise qui ne dit rien de qui ils sont, et laisse leur histoire dans le hors-champ. C'est cette modestie du médium – compatible avec une grande qualité plastique – qui rend paradoxalement cette photographie émouvante, s'évitant fermement toute forme de sentimentalisme ou de dramatisation. Car si le contexte est sombre et des plus alarmants pour cet anticapitaliste révolté qu'est Sekula, l'humeur de ce musée n'est en rien plaintive, allégée même par ce ballet d'objets parfois insolites ou par les cases de comics reportés sur le mur, à l'exemple de celle qui figure l'improbable séance de psychanalyse d'un matelot. Il y a même dans la force des bras employés à une tâche brutale et l'énergie des gestes répétitifs – comme ceux des ouvriers du port de pêche japonais dans le film Tsukijii (2001) dont on découvre les conditions rudimentaires –, plus qu'un hommage rendu aux travailleurs derrière le rideau du prêt à consommer, la conviction que ces poings peuvent un jour se dresser. ■

COMMISSAIRE : Jürgen Bock

ALLAN SEKULA, THE DOCKER'S MUSEUM, jusqu'au 20 mai, La Criée, centre d'art contemporain, place Honoré Commeurec, 35000 Rennes, tél. 02 23 62 25 10, www.criee.org

theguardian

Allan Sekula
The Guardian
April 20th, 2012
by Sukhdev Sandhu

Allan Sekula: filming the forgotten resistance at sea

The photographer's new film, about global maritime trade, has been hailed by Occupy activists. Its maker has spent a life challenging new forms of capitalism

Sukhdev Sandhu
guardian.co.uk, Friday 20 April 2012 22.55 BST
Article history



Still from *The Forgotten Space*. Photograph: Allan Sekula, Noël Burch

Water has always played a large part in the photographer Allan Sekula's life. As a student in San Diego at the end of the 1960s, he used to wander downtown and gaze up at the flophouse hotels through whose windows he could see money being exchanged between prostitutes and sailors. "It was Edward Hopper on military steroids," he recalls. "That was the time of Vietnam, and there were even mutinies on some ships – especially among African-American sailors who were protesting against racism in the navy. Young guys my age from the west coast were being dehumanised and turned into a few good men.

Damsels in Distress
Production year: 2011
Country: USA
Cert (UK): 15
Runtime: 97 mins
Directors: Whit Stillman
Cast: Adam Brody, Analeigh Tipton, Greta Gerwig
More on this film

The Forgotten Space by Allan Sekula and Noël Burch
Tate Modern
Date: 23 April 2012
Time: 6:30pm
Duration: 2 hours
Event website
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"They'd come to the fence of the Marine Corps Recruiting Depot and say: 'If I can get over this fence will you meet me at the laundromat down the street in an hour with a car?' We managed to get some of them out. But often the shore patrol and navy police would come and pull them away. They'd be taken to brigs, assigned to a motivation platoon, and beaten up. The depot was next to an international airport on the waterfront, and some of the recruits were so desperate to escape they'd tried to get away by running across the runways, where they'd be hit by planes and be killed. This never appeared on the news."

Sekula, who had grown up in the Los Angeles harbour town of San Pedro, was learning that the maritime world, far from being a realm of pleasure cruises and play, was riven by struggle and class conflict. Since then much of his extraordinary body of experimental work has been devoted to chronicling the social, economic and political dynamics of life on the oceans. His latest exercise in hydropoetics, a cine-essay entitled *The Forgotten Space* that he co-directed with Noël Burch, uses the statistic that 90% of cargoes today are carried by ship as its

cue to develop a wide-ranging thesis about containerisation, globalisation and invisible labour.

Seas are fascinating, Sekula argues, because of the counter-orthodoxies and refutations they offer to modern political thought. "In Alain Tanner's *Les Hommes Du Port*, a documentary about dockworkers in Genoa, he says: 'The time of the sea runs counter to the lie.' He doesn't say what the lie is. But you know: it's everything about neoliberalism. The sea is all about slow time – things move slowly, there's a lot of waiting – and as such it contradicts all the mythologies of instantaneity perpetuated by electronic media."

Sekula believes that seafaring work, like many other forms of manual labour, is ignored by many journalists whose own class status predisposes them towards fixating on white-collar and mental labour. But, as *The Forgotten Space* shows to haunting effect, this invisibility is also structural: containerisation has depeopled the bustling port cultures of previous eras and left in their wake automated landscapes.

Sekula, who was born in 1951 and whose grandfather migrated to the US from Poland, thinks that America has a particular amnesia regarding its relation to the sea. "We've always focused on the frontier hypothesis of US history. In spite of the takeover of the Panama Canal and the annexing of Hawaii, the sequential opening of western space has mainly been seen as a matter of terrestrial dominion. Today the function of the US navy is to protect the sea lanes of the world – that's free trade. And it's America's technical and legal innovations that have made the globalisation of sea trade possible."

This kind of systematic analysis, allied with deep, almost ethnographic research, is also present in Sekula's influential book *Fish Story* (1995), which he describes as "a sort of experimental essay in words and pictures that sometimes reads like fiction, sometimes like an essay, sometimes journalism, sometimes prose-poetry". Its photo-text form recalls earlier investigations of immiserated labour such as George Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) and James Agee and Walker Evans's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941), both of which Sekula admires.

"I'm more sympathetic to traditions of critical realism than a lot of people in the art world," he admits. "They treat journalism as a bad object and always think that when they intervene it's without the naivety of the journalist. That doesn't seem fair to what the best journalism and non-fiction has been."

Sekula's search for what the film historian Edward Dimendberg has called an "honest materiality" is informed by his own upbringing in San Pedro (a working-class town). His first major work, *Aerospace Folktales* (1973), featured interviews with his father, a chemical engineer at Lockheed, who had lost his job. "Being working class gives you a bitter sense that all the promissory notes of the American Dream are rarely cashed in. You see failure and blockages all around you."

At San Diego, he took classes with the Frankfurt School philosopher Herbert Marcuse and conceptual artist John Baldessari, and studied alongside Martha Rosler, who would later come to prominence for her interest in questions of geopolitical infrastructures and social exclusion. He also read essays on photography by John Berger and Roland Barthes, and as a result began to theorise his future work. "I wanted to explore the discursive split between art and documentary, the myth of Alfred Stieglitz against the myth of Lewis Hine." (Stieglitz was a revered figure in the development of art photography. Hine, by contrast, used his camera as a tool in the service of social reform.)

Sekula was sceptical of the romanticism and love of metaphors he discerned in the work of Stieglitz. "I saw the path of symbolism as one that led to hermeticism or a retreat from the social," he recalls. "I was trying to defend a critical social realism." His success at doing this, both in his often-cited study *Photography against the Grain: Essays and Photoworks 1973–83* (1984) and recent films such as *The Lottery of the Sea* (2006), has won him many admirers. Among them is the American maritime historian Marcus Rediker, co-author with Peter Linebaugh of *The Many-Headed*

Hydra (2000): "The old national stories just aren't making much sense to people any more. Once you start thinking transnationally, you're led to the sea: the ship is the first great instrument of globalisation. Allan's idea that you can observe the compression of time and space in the modern world from the decks of a containerised cargo vessel is brilliant."

It's certainly an idea that has considerable potency in the present climate, when growing numbers of people all around the world are questioning the capitalist orthodoxies they've been fed by economists and politicians. In Barcelona last year, a gallery that screened *The Forgotten Space* was visited by many of the *indignados* who were protesting nearby. In Oakland, Occupy activists planned to show a pirated version of the film on a temporary screen they installed after blocking some of the streets in the port area.

This kind of resistance reminds Sekula that his collaborator Noël Burch had "hoped the film could 'be completed by other means – and of necessity it would have to be completed by different means'. He meant by self-organised political means on the part of the people. The sea has often been thought of as recuperative; that more and more dockers and working people are insisting on not being moved on or not being swept away by the forces of efficiency and rationalisation gives me grounds for optimism."

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Beaux Arts éditions

Allan Sekula
Beaux Arts Editions
November, 2009
by Judocaël Lavrador

ALLAN SEKULA

À contre-courant

PAR JUDICAËL LAVRADOR



Allan Sekula est né en 1951 à Erie, aux États-Unis. Il vit et travaille à Los Angeles.

GALERIES

Michel Rein, Paris
Christopher Grimes Gallery, Santa Monica
Galeria Filomena Soares, Lisbonne
Galerie Traversée, Madrid

EXPOSITIONS PERSONNELLES

2009 : «Ecu Nine», Montalvo Arts Center, Saratoga
2008 : galerie Michel Rein, Paris
2007 : Christopher Grimes Gallery, Santa Monica
2006 : «Allan Sekula, Fish Story Chapter One», Frac-Bretagne, Châteaugiron
2005 : «Shipwreck and Workers», STUK Kunstencentrum, Leuven
2004 : «Prayer for the Americans», galerie Michel Rein, Paris
2003 : «Black Tide/Marea Negra», Christopher Grimes Gallery, Santa Monica
2002 : «Waiting for Tear Gas», Centrum for Fotografi, Stockholm/Camera Austria, Graz
2001 : «Titanic's Wake», galerie Michel Rein, Paris
2000 : «Dear Bill Gates», Museum Boymans-van-Beuningen, Rotterdam
1998 : «Dead Letter Office», palais des Beaux-Arts, Bruxelles
1987 : PS1, New York

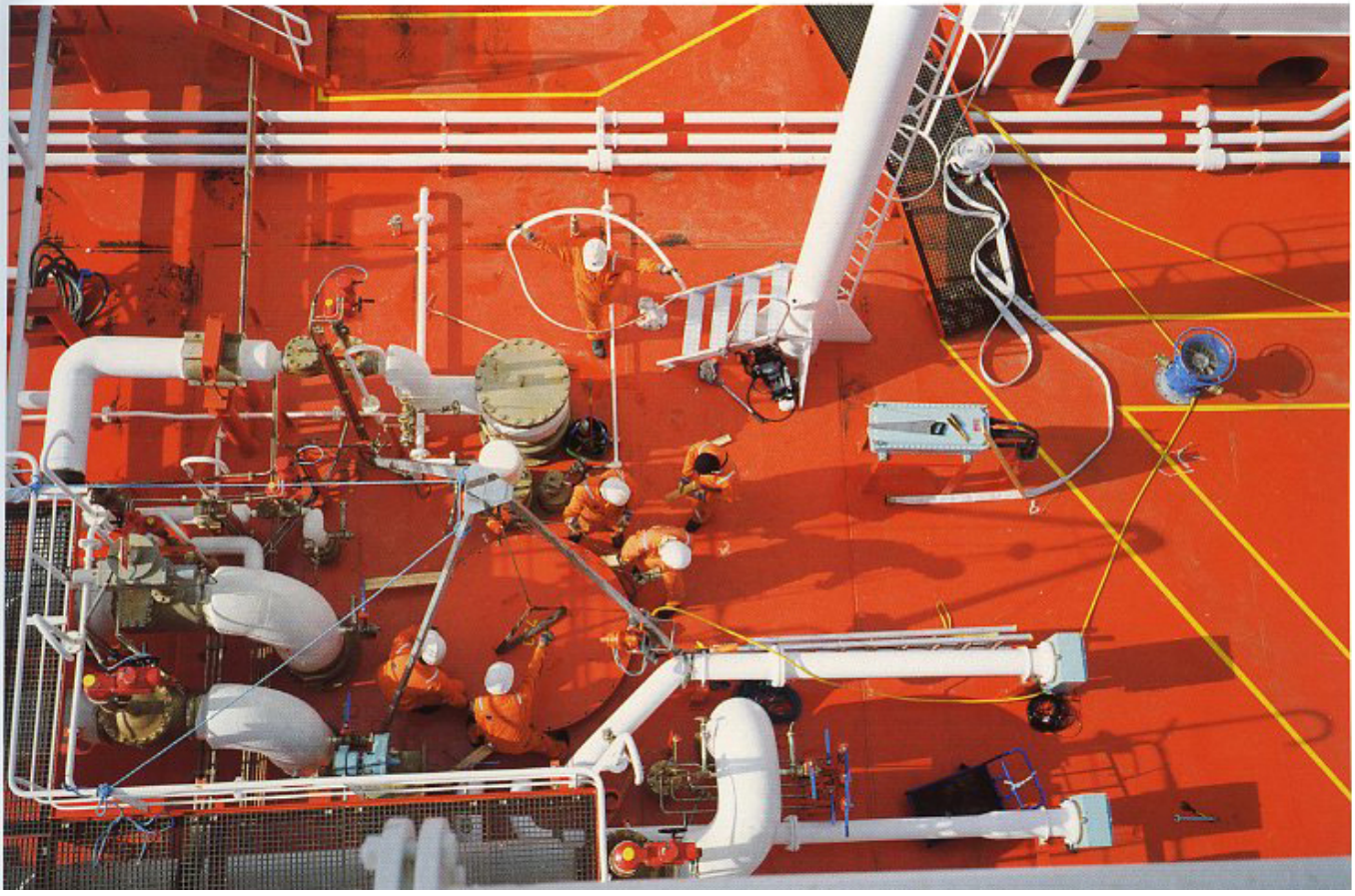
Jusqu'à la «Documenta 11» de Kassel, l'œuvre d'Allan Sekula était singulièrement peu reconnue. Trop complexe, trop grinçante ou trop critique, elle figurait rarement au programme des grandes biennales. Aujourd'hui, et alors que ses premières séries datent des années 1970, Allan Sekula, artiste, essayiste, critique et historien de la photographie, pourrait bien faire figure de précurseur d'une certaine veine documentaire dans le panorama de la photographie contemporaine. Sauf que, mêlant textes et images dans des projets qui alternent aussi les formats, les genres et les tonalités, il reste à 56 ans tel qu'en lui-même : résolument à contre-courant des normes esthétiques ainsi que de l'idéologie dominante. Selon ses propres termes, il vise à «construire des œuvres de l'intérieur des situations concrètes de la vie, des situations où il y a conflit d'intérêt ou de représentation». Il se risque ainsi dans un réalisme de «l'expérience quotidienne sous et contre l'emprise du capitalisme». Un réalisme critique avec des images du monde du travail, celui des sociétés postindustrielles où tout un pan de l'activité ouvrière a été soustraite à la vue et délocalisée sous l'effet irrésistible de la mondialisation. Images politiques, économiques et sociales ? Sans doute, mais pas seulement, ses grandes séries prenant plus largement une dimension allégorique, à l'image de «Fish Story». Cette œuvre en sept parties qui comprend une centaine de photos, deux *slide-shows* (projection de diapositives) et une vingtaine de textes, examine les réalités du travail en mer et dans les ports du monde entier. De 1989 à 1995, des États-Unis à la Corée du Sud, Allan Sekula met en relation les conditions de vie des travailleurs et le flux de marchandises, étudie l'histoire culturelle et l'évolution industrielle de grands sites portuaires et en livre des comptes-rendus scientifiques et théoriques. Analyses érudites et rigoureuses, portraits et paysages s'imprègnent alors déjà volontiers d'une tonalité épique et prennent des résonances métaphoriques.

Pour Sekula, les containers qui s'empilent dans les zones portuaires représentent «les cercueils de la main-d'œuvre absente». Vision macabre récurrente chez celui qui photographie avec le même scepticisme une épave à Istanbul et le décor du film *Titanic* à Tijuana («Titanic's Wake», 1998-1999). Le naufrage devient ici la métaphore de l'exploitation catastrophique des pays du tiers-monde par le capitalisme ... que Sekula ne renonce pas à prendre d'assaut : mi-sérieux, mi-facétieux, dans le triptyque «Dear Bill Gates» (1999), il se met lui-même en scène en train de nager au large de la maison high-tech du tout-puissant patron de Microsoft. Dans un autre slide-show, il arpente à nouveau la terre ferme des luttes antimondialisation en photographiant les manifestants anti-OMC de Seattle. Et comme pour boucler la boucle, cinq ans après le 11-Septembre, il rend un poignant hommage aux Américains. «Prayer for the Americans» est un panorama des grands paysages d'outre-Atlantique, accompagné des récits de Mark Twain, auteur de *Tom Sawyer*, facétieux enfant du Missouri. En vis-à-vis de ces visions bucoliques, Sekula place des photos figurant l'autre Amérique, celle des grandes villes et des ghettos. Plus qu'une image du monde, la photographie d'Allan Sekula incarne d'ailleurs un art du montage, une manière de raconter et de commenter le monde. Dans sa plus récente série, «Shipwreck and Workers», il n'hésite pas à réassembler de vieilles images et d'autres inédites, avec des textes poétiques aux connotations sociologiques. Comme si ses projets devaient de plus en plus se définir tels des mille-feuilles aussi épais que le réel.



Série «Shipwreck and Workers», *Museum Guards, Seattle,* 1999-2008. © Allan Sekula. Courtesy galerie Michel Rein, Paris.

Série «Methane For All», *Maiden voyage of the Sestao Knutsen,* 2008. © Allan Sekula. Courtesy galerie Michel Rein, Paris.



Le Monde

Allan Sekula
Le Monde
March 8th, 2008
by Claire Guillot

Galeries

La mondialisation selon Allan Sekula

Une dizaine de photographies et une vidéo de l'artiste américain

Ce n'est sans doute pas dans l'espace étroit d'une galerie que le travail d'Allan Sekula donne sa pleine mesure. A la Documenta de Kassel de 2007, l'artiste américain avait particulièrement soigné sa mise en scène : le long d'un escalier monumental menant au château de la ville, il avait placé de très grandes photos montrant des travailleurs manuels. Les visiteurs qui voulaient grimper jusqu'au château devaient aussi visiter le « monument des travailleurs » d'Allan Sekula, l'effort physique lié à leur ascension (cinq cents marches) venant évoquer la pénibilité des métiers évoqués.

On retrouve certaines de ces images exposées à la galerie parisienne Michel Rein, qui présente, jusqu'au 5 avril, une dizaine de photographies et une vidéo de l'artiste, également critique et essayiste. La plupart de ces travaux tentent, exercice difficile, de donner un visage à la complexité des échanges économiques et à la mondialisation, si souvent désincarnée. Le tout sous une forme documentaire, détachée de tout événement.

Allan Sekula bâtit des triptyques ou des diptyques sobres et harmonieux, portraits ou paysages qui fonctionnent, au-delà de leur réalisme, par métaphore ou allusions. Les images se répètent, le texte se surimpose parfois à l'image, le célèbre slogan « Travailler plus pour gagner plus » devenant bien ironique lorsqu'il est imprimé sur l'image d'un soudeur de chantier naval découpant de l'acier à Ensenada, au Mexique.

La mer est d'ailleurs omniprésente dans le travail de Sekula. Parce qu'elle offre un lieu à la fois clos et très plastique, chargé de fiction et de fantasmes. Mais surtout parce qu'elle concentre, du commerce triangulaire aux marées noires, toute l'histoire et les avatars de la mondialisation. ■

CLAIRE GUILLOT