

Une vision du monde, a Vision of the World

Exhibition curated by: Christine Van Assche, curator in charge of new media at the MNAM/Centre Pompidou

exhibition designed by: Bureau des Mésarchitectures (Didier Faustino, Pascal Mazoyer, Mathieu Herbelin)

La Maison Rouge is continuing its cycle presenting private collections with a selection of works owned by Isabelle and Jean-Conrad Lemaître, a French couple currently based in London. Their collection consists mainly of recent videos and films (most of them made in the last ten years) by young artists (the majority are under 40) representing a total of 18 countries. These pieces constitute an analysis of the world we are living in and of the language of film and video in relation to painting, cinema, documentary and television.

To view these videos and films, the exhibition designers, the Bureau des Mésarchitectures, conceived a network of hexagonal cells based on the chemical model of aldehydes. This layout echoes the alchemy involved in the creation of the Lemaître Collection. In the higher room, works that require a less secluded perception are set facing one another, and can be viewed individually only from a particular position. Finally, a screening room allows visitors to consider the relation to cinema, which is so important to these collectors.

The 25 works are presented in three thematic sections:

the poetics of the world: the artists offers us fragmented but very topical visions of parts of the world they know well: Fikret Atay, Allora & Calzadilla, The Atlas Group/Walid Raad, Yael Bartana, Jeremy Deller, Sebastian Diaz Morales, Emily Jacir, Isaac Julien.

the politics of the other: artists are also attentive to alterity, as we can see from the vision of drug addicts by Jeroen de Rijcke and Willem de Rooij, or Gillian Wearing's study of teenagers, or again, Aernout Mik's view of outsiders. The more allegorical works by Sigalit Landau, Tacita Dean and Zineb Sedira question the body as the vehicle of the Other's image.

the aesthetics of exchange: video is an artistic medium but also a means of communication that has been used by artists since the 1970s. In 2000 a number of video artists reactivated this latter function, using video actively as a medium for exchange: Matthias Müller, João Onofre, Mario Garcia Torres, Mark Wallinger.

In addition to these three sections, a programme of works by the following is being shown on a big screen and several flat screens: Nikolaj Bendix, Skyum Larsen, Christian Marclay, Yang Fudong, Artur Zmijewski, Hassan Khan, Deimantas Narkevicius, Rachel Reupke.

1- Yael Bartana (born in 1970 in Kfar-Yehzekel, Israel. Lives and works in Israel and in the Netherlands.)
Kings of the Hill, 2004, Betacam, sound, colour, 07' 50", no. 5/5.

At the weekend Israeli men take their 4WDs out to the coast near Tel Aviv for a bit of fun. All day long, until sunset, when the Sabbath begins, these men tirelessly repeat their efforts to drive up to the tops of the sand dunes. In this video Yael Bartana takes an acerbic look at the ideal of the "New Jew" promoted by the Zionist movement in the 1920s, as it lingers on in modern Israeli society. These men at the wheels of their powerful offroaders are, in a way, replaying the heroic figure of the colonist setting out to conquer the desert and cultivate arid land. In this artist's vision, their absurd and endless action is an archetype of leisure activity in the consumerist West.

2- Emily Jacir (born in 1970 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Lives and works in Ramallah, Palestine, and in New York, United States.)
Crossing Surda (a record of going to and from work), 2002, Mini DV, sound, colour, 30' and 132', video installation shown simultaneously on monitor (30') and projection (132'), no. 35/100.
Emily Jacir is represented by the Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London.

This video is Emily Jacir's record of eight consecutive days travelling between Ramallah and Birzeit, via the Surda checkpoint set up by the Israeli army in 2001.

"9 December 2002, I decide to film my journey to the university. The occupying Israeli army caught me filming and stopped me. I gave them my American passport, which they threw into the mud, telling me that we were in 'Israel' and in a military zone where filming was prohibited. They kept me out in the rain for three hours, near their tank. They confiscated my film then let me go. [...]. When I got back home, I cut a hole in the bottom of my bag and fitted my camera into it. For eight days, I filmed my movements to and from Birzeit via the Surda checkpoint."

(Emily Jacir)

As the obligatory point of access for great numbers of the population, the checkpoint epitomises the conditions imposed by the occupant: fragmentation of space, hampered movement, waiting lines, loss of rights.

3- Jennifer Allora & Guillermo Calzadilla (Jennifer Allora, born in 1974 in Philadelphia, USA. Guillermo Calzadilla, born in 1971 in Havana, Cuba. Live and work in Puerto Rico.)

Returning a Sound, 2004, Dvcam, sound, colour, 05' 42", no. 2/6.

Jennifer Allora & Guillermo Calzadilla are represented by Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris.

Between 1941 and May 2003 two thirds of the little island of Vieques (Puerto Rico) were occupied by an American military base, and the 9,400 inhabitants found themselves sandwiched between a firing range and a munitions dump. They spent over sixty years fighting against the occupation.

In 2004, when this film was made, the protests and civil disobedience finally bore fruit and Washington decided to withdraw the American troops.

In this video, the two Puerto Rican artists film a civil disobedience activist, Homar, riding round the island on his moped. Luxuriant landscapes alternate with images of the ecological damage caused by the American occupation. The noise of bombs, once heard round the island, is now replaced by the sound of the trumpet that the artists have fixed to Homar's exhaust pipe.

The trumpet sound carried round the island by the bike also alerts islanders to the issues that must be dealt with as they reclaim their land: decontamination of the military sites, compensation and care for contaminated individuals, the dangers of property speculation. The following year Allora & Calzadilla asked a political leader from Vieques to sail round the island on a boat made from an overturned table, symbolically inviting the population to take part in a round table on the island's future (Under Discussion, 2005).

4- Sigalit Landau (born in 1969 in Israel. Lives and works in Tel Aviv, Israel, and Paris, France.)

Barbed Hula, 2002, Betacam, sound, colour, 01' 48", no. 14/18,

Sigalit Landau is represented by Galerie Anita Beckers, Frankfurt.

Barbed Hula is a filmed performance in which Sigalit Landau, nude, uses a ring of barbed wire as a hula-hoop. This wire directly references the material used by soldiers to delimit an area or establish a frontier.

Shot on a beach south of Tel Aviv, in a country whose limits are constantly being questioned, the action acquires a particular resonance. Although the action is not quite what it seems – the barbs face outwards, the wounds are in fact simulated by make-up – it does evoke a very real frontier that is maintained only at the price of continuous, harrowing and draining effort.

5- Zineb Sedira (born in 1963 in Gennevilliers, France. Lives and works in London since 1986.)

Don't do to her what you did to me, 1998-2001, Betacam, sound, colour, 08' 49", no. 1/3

Zineb Sedira is represented by Galerie Kamel Mennour, Paris.

A hand, seen through a glass of water, writes on the photograph of a woman: "Don't do to her what you did to me." Then the photograph is torn up and placed in the water. The ink dissolves in a series of arabesques and, with the disappearance of the words, meaning becomes uncertain. Suddenly this action, part of a personal experience – writing a note to a friend or lover – is resonant with cultural references and acquires a ritual dimension. The ink, spreading through the water, seems like blood; the blackened mixture is drunk; the words are transformed into prayer.

"My work explores the paradoxes and intersections of my dual French and Algerian identity, and as a person living in England. I use video [...] to examine the themes of genre, family, representation, language and memory. [...] The theme of representation is central to my artistic practice."

(Zineb Sedira)

6- Aernout Mik (born in 1962 in Groningen, Netherlands. Lives and works in Amsterdam.)

Park, 2002, Betacam, silent, colour, 20', video installation: retroprojection, no. 4/4.

Aernout Mik is represented by Galerie Carlier/Gebauer, Berlin.

In this installation, which comprises a projector on the ground sending a retroprojected image onto a wall/screen, Aernout Mik creates a space of proximity between the spectator and the characters in his film.

Motley groups of men with their dogs are seen around a tree. Some keep jumping and jumping until they are exhausted, and then start again, while others talk amongst themselves, and another man, is lying reading his newspaper, oblivious to the activity around him.

Is this a rave or a picnic? Mik provides no answer, leaving us waiting, expectant. Like the behaviour of the characters, whose motives and aims are beyond us, the film too seems without an obvious purpose. The camera probes continuously the zone before it, but never pans across or out. We are therefore unable to grasp the unity of the action and the relations between the different figures.

7- Jeroen de Rijke & Willem de Rooij (Jeroen de Rijke born in 1970 in Brouwershaven, Netherlands. Willem de Rooij,

born in 1969 in Berverwijk, Netherlands. Live and work in, Amsterdam.)

Junks, 1994, Hi-8, sound, colour, 20', no. 3/3.

Jeroen de Rijke & Willem de Rooij are represented by Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris.

Jeroen de Rijke and Willem de Rooij see their work in terms of a mixture of sculpture and painting. In *Junks*, their first film together, and in their other works, the mode of presentation is almost as important as the film itself. The black base, matching the colour of the monitor placed upon it, adds a sculptural dimension, while the tight, fixed framing of the faces, seen against a dark ground, heighten the frontality of the image, and thus the resemblance to painted portraits. The image, placed at face height (putting us in the same position as the camera), and the sound, which is exactly what was recorded during the filming, intensify our feeling of closeness to these drug addicts. Thus, despite the lack of dialogue and the reduced action, de Rijke and de Rooij manage to convey a kind of narrative and express the drama written in these faces.

8- Tacita Dean (born in 1965, Canterbury, Great Britain. Lives and works in Berlin, Germany.)

Gellért, 1998, 16 mm, sound, colour, 06', no. 1/4.

Tacita Dean is represented by the Marian Goodman Gallery in Paris/New York.

This film was shot in the hot baths of the famous spa at the Gellért Hotel in Budapest. The walls around these pools are covered with the words of visitors grateful for the relief brought by their waters. Gellért evokes the Fountain of Youth myth painted by Lucas Cranach in 1546 (Gemälde Galerie, Berlin). At the centre of Cranach's painting, Venus is perched atop a fountain that rises from a pool in which elderly women, some of them infirm, are frolicking and diving in order to recapture their youthful beauty. Tacita Dean's camera sympathetically follows the aging, corpulent women who go from shower to pool, hoping, if not to regain the charms of their youth, then at least to ease the ills of age. These bodies moving slowly in this old-fashioned setting arouse thoughts of the inevitable passing of time and our desire to escape it.

9- Sebastian Diaz Morales (born in 1975 in Comodoro Rivadavia, Argentina. Lives and works in Amsterdam.)

The Persecution of the White Car, 2001, MDV, sound, colour, 25', no. 2/5.

Sebastian Diaz Morales is represented by Galerie Carlier/Gebauer, Berlin.

Sebastian Diaz Morales makes copious use of the images he captures on his frequent travels. His films use montage to offer a highly personal mix of travelogue, social commentary and the dreams and tales that infuse our imaginations. In the first half of this work, the camera follows white cars through the city. For about twenty minutes, the narrator and his interlocutor comment on the images and the story, their voice-over producing a reflective proposition about the form of the film.

The construction of *The Persecution of the White Car* and the narrator's monologue transport the spectator into an oneiric world that is nevertheless grounded in a real context – Durban, South Africa – that is fraught with social and political references.

10- The Atlas Group/Walid Raad (born in 1967 in Chbanieh, Lebanon. Lives and works in New York, USA.)

Project initiated in 1999 in Beirut by Walid Raad.

I Only Wish That I Could Weep, 2002, Betacam, silent, colour, 05', no. 1/7.

The Atlas Group/Walid Raad is represented by the Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London.

Initiated by Walid Raad in 1999 and based in Beirut and New York, the Atlas Group project is dedicated to research into contemporary Lebanese history. The Atlas Group locates, studies and produces fictive visual, aural and textual documents that shed light on the recent history and present situation of Lebanon. *I Only Wish That I Could Weep* was purportedly sent to the group in 2000 by a Lebanese security guard in charge of watching the Corniche, the seafront walk in Beirut, using a surveillance system installed by the country's information services in 1992. Every day, operator #17 aims his camera just a little bit more at the sunset, giving up his espionage role to film the beauty of his country's landscape. In 1996, the agent lost his post but he managed to hold on to the recordings and pass them on to the Atlas Group, which has now made them public.

11- Fikret Atay (born in 1976 in Batman, Turkey. Lives and works in Batman.)

Bang Bang, 2003, Dvcam, sound, colour, 02' 17", no. 5/7,

Fikret Atay is represented by Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris.

Filming in the manner of a war reporter, Fikret Atay plunges us into an armed battle played out between four children chasing each other around stationary train wagons. The camera's closeness to the "combatants" and the precision with which the children play at war, and with which one of the groups act out their death, imbues the scene with a genuinely tragic feel.

In this video Fikret Atay echoes the plight of the people of Batman, the artist's home town, where *Bang Bang* was filmed. The town is set in the military-occupied Kurdish zone on the Turkish frontier with Iraq. In spite of the region's rich oil deposits, unemployment and poverty are rife. Every day, the trains that come into Batman station deposit fresh soldiers and then leave with their cargo of petrol. As in his other videos, Fikret Atay uses explicitly staged events to talk about the everyday difficulties of his fellow citizens "in a city where," he says, "it is practically impossible to make art."

12- Jeremy Deller (born in 1966 in London, Great Britain. Lives and works in London.)

Memory Bucket, 2003, Dvcam, sound, colour, 21' 45", video installation, no. 2/5.

Jeremy Deller is represented by Galerie Artconcept, Paris.

Memory Bucket is a documentary-type film articulated around two Texan towns: Waco, notorious for the siege of the Davidian sect headquarters by the American army in 1993, when 80 people were killed, and Crawford, where President George W. Bush has his ranch. During a two-month residency in San Antonio (Texas), Deller set about collecting aural interviews with locals, archive images, maps, photographs and various other cultural signs (slogans, stickers, posters, record covers, T-shirts) expressing a party, community or group identity. Deller then used what he had assembled to write a recent history of Texas evoking the complex links between personal experience, collective history and the current impact of the war in Iraq.

13- Isaac Julien (born in 1960 in London, Great Britain. Lives and works in London.)
Territories, 1984, 16 mm, sound, colour, 24'.

The work of Isaac Julien comes out of the social context of 1980s England, and in particular out of the anti-racism movement that developed at that time. He founded his own production company, Sanfoka Film/Video Collective, in order to produce and make films on the image of the black community in the media and in Western culture generally.

In *Territories*, Sanfoka's first production, Julien was reacting to the realism of the films produced by the BBC by introducing a fictional dimension.

In this experimental documentary, Julien presents the history of the Notting Hill Carnival as a symbolic act of resistance. The film is divided into two parts? In the first, images of a BBC documentary about the carnival alternate with those of two black filmmakers sitting at an editing desk, commenting on and analysing those same images as they appear on a monitor. Here we have the confrontation of two interpretations: the official viewpoint, that of the BBC, which emphasises the exotic, festive dimension of a carnival originating in the Caribbean, and that of the women filmmakers who see the BBC documentary as expressing a desire on the part of power to empty the carnival of its subversive content. For Julien, the narrator of the documentary and the two women occupy opposing territories that are defined by race, social class and sexual relations.

In the second part of the film, Julien presents images of these two territories by presenting a series of oppositions: the police, who think of the young blacks as delinquents, the youths, for whom the police represent the oppressor; the standardised English of the BBC and the multiplicity of discourses and voices heard throughout *Territories*; the musical themes chosen by the BBC and the sound systems of the Carnival.

The superposition of images also contributes to this dialectics, showing arrests and clashes with a Union Jack in flames, or two men kissing in front of a policeman.

14- Gillian Wearing (born in 1963 in Birmingham, Great Britain. Lives and works in London.)
Boytime, 1996, Betacam SP, sound, colour, 56', no. 1/3,
Gillian Wearing is represented in France by Galerie Anne de Villepoix, Paris.

Like most other pieces by Gillian Wearing, *Boytime* was made over a period of several years. *Boytime* 1996, the video presented in this exhibition, is the first in a series of three, and shows four teenagers sitting facing the camera in a still shot that lasts nearly an hour. Their silence and immobility, and the colours of their clothes against the white wall, are conducive to a contemplative approach. While the film itself is like a painting or photograph, it does not so much settle on a fixed image as propose the sensation of a duration.

The temporary inactivity of the boys while the image is being recorded heightens this effect. By focusing on these characters, the artist is also capturing the experience of passing time.

15- Rachel Reupke (born in 1971 in Great Britain. Lives and works in London.)
Infrastructure, 2002, Betacam, sound, black and white, 14', no. 2/5,

Infrastructure consists of four sequences. In each one, an impressive communications infrastructure (an airport, a motorway, railways, a port) is seen in a majestic landscape, accompanied by a fleeting, almost imperceptible action: someone hurrying off an aeroplane, a chase through fields, a murder.

Digital technology is used to enable the coexistence of differing rhythms and scales in the images, bringing together temporalities, territories and histories that, in principle, are alien to each other.

"Infrastructure combines the language of painting with that of cinema. Viewers are free to construct their own visual exploration of a scene. Time is manipulated in order to give the action an artificial rhythm and the digital technology used to construct this piece of work intensifies this atmosphere of hyperreality.

Infrastructure comprises four sequences which confront the sublime entity of nature with the threatening power of technology. This critique of the modern world, conveyed by a romantic aesthetics, is situated at the interface of the experiences of painting and cinema."

(Rachel Reupke)

16- Artur Zmijewski (born in 1966 in Warsaw, Poland. Lives and works in Warsaw.)
Lisa, 2003, Betacam SP, sound, colour, 10' 05", no. 1/3,
Artur Zmijewski is represented by Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zurich.

Artur Zmijewski's video is the portrait of a young German he met in Israel.

Zmijewski uses the documentary form to tell Lisa's story: shocked to discover the history of her country during the Second World War, Lisa, convinced that she is the reincarnation of a young boy who died in the Nazi concentration camps, has been living alone in Jerusalem since 1992, searching for some path to redemption. Lisa's touching, singular story conveys the reality of a national trauma, and the difficulty for her generation of constructing its own history.

17- Christian Marclay (born in 1955 in San Rafael, USA. Lives and works in New York.)

Mixed Reviews, 2001, Betacam, silent, colour, 30' no. 2/6,

Christian Marclay is represented the Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.

Since the end of the 1970s Christian Marclay has been exploring the relations between image and sound through the practice of performance and by making works –installations, videos, sculptures, drawings, photographs – in which he generally uses collage. In *Mixed Reviews* he explores the ways of visually representing voice and sound. Working from newspaper articles in which writers describe a piece of music or sound, the artist composed a 2,500-word wall text. Whenever the piece was presented in a non-Anglophone country, the translator was asked to translate the text, not from the original, but from the most recent translation, so that each new text was a little further removed from the aural experience that the original authors were trying to put into words. Later, after reading a passage of Caruso's journal where the famous tenor described how he managed to get a deaf, blind woman to feel his voice by means of touch, Marclay decided to further extend the work by asking an actor who had been born deaf to transcribe *Mixed Reviews* into American Sign Language (ASL) and filmed him doing so. The resulting video shows how the actor manages to express sound visually by means of gestures and movements.

18- Nikolaj Bendix Skyum Larsen (born in 1971 in Aalborg, Denmark. Lives and works in Great Britain.)

My Cat and I, 1999, Mini DV, silent, colour, 04' 53", no. 1/5,

My Cat and I is a filmed performance in which Nikolaj Larsen, holding his cat in his arms, attempts to stand upright with his face and body perfectly still as he looks into the camera. The pose, which is unnatural for the cat, turns into a struggle between the artist, who starts looking like a member of the Hitler Youth in his carmine shirt buttoned up to the neck and his hair combed back, and the animal, struggling vainly to free itself from its master's grip.

The video ends only when the cat finally gives in and takes up the same pose as Nikolaj Larsen.

19- Matthias Müller (born in 1961 in Bielefeld, Germany. Lives and works in Cologne and Bielefeld.)

Phantom, 2001, DV, sound, colour, 04' 39", no. 2/5.

Matthias Müller is represented by the Timothy Taylor Gallery, London.

"My interest in curtains goes back to childhood, when I set up a little theatre in an empty bedroom in our house. All I needed [...] was a curtain. Curtains serve to hide things or reveal them. They stimulate expectation or curiosity." (M. Müller)

The spectator remains on the threshold, on the edge of the space constructed by a curtain which is slightly open. On the other side, evanescent silhouettes appear, like phantoms. We cannot identify them clearly, but they evoke emblematic figures from the movies, characters from film with no real existence. The enigmatic, suggestive image, with its solarised look, was obtained using the device elaborated by the artist in order to integrate these sequences into his own images, by filming their projection on two superimposed screens and then developing them as a negative.

20- Mark Wallinger (born in 1959 in Chigwell, Great Britain. Lives and works in London.)

Threshold to the Kingdom, 2000, Betacam, sound, colour, 11' 10", no. 5/10.

Mark Wallinger is represented by the Timothy Taylor Gallery, London.

In *Threshold to the Kingdom* we see passengers walking towards the arrivals hall in an airport. The film is projected in slow motion and accompanied by Allegri's *Miserere*. Set to this spiritual music evoking suffering, this arrival in the UK is like seeing souls passing through the gates of paradise. A banal experience thus takes on an ironic, symbolic dimension: arriving in England, as experienced by crowds of immigrants every day, becomes an arrival in the ideal Kingdom.

21- Mario Garcia Torres (born in 1975 in Monclova, Coahuila, Mexico. Lives and works in Los Angeles.)

One Minute to act a Title: Kim Jong-Il Favorite Movies, 2005, Betacam, sound, silent, black and white, 03', no. 2/5.

Mario Garcia Torres is represented by Galerie Jan Mot, Brussels.

Mario Garcia Torres films in a very simple style, in black-and-white, a group of friends miming the titles of the favourite films of North Korean dictator Kim Jong-Il.

Known for his love of movies, Kim Jong-Il is the autocratic ruler of a country that is on its knees. In this video we discover that this apostle of propaganda films is also a great lover of Hollywood blockbusters such as Doctor Zhivago, Rambo, From Russia with Love, You Only Live Twice, The Godfather, Friday the 13th, Gone with the Wind, etc.).

22- João Onofre (born in 1976 in Lisbon, Portugal. Lives and works in Lisbon.)

Casting, 2000, Betacam, sound, colour, 12' 59", no. 3/5.

João Onofre is represented by the I-20 Gallery, New York.

João Onofre brought together a group of models in Lisbon who usually work for advertising and asked each one to come before the camera and repeat, "Che io abbia la forza, la convinzione, e il coraggio" (give me the strength, the conviction and the courage), the words spoken by Ingrid Bergman in Roberto Rossellini's film Stromboli. At the time, many were critical at the presence of this famous Hollywood actress in a Neorealist film. By having the words spoken by youngsters who are not at all prepared for such a performance, Onofre makes us aware of what is at stake in a casting session, of the strength, conviction and courage needed to get the part and, in the process, to stand out from the group.

23- Yang Fudong (born in 1971 in Beijing, China. Lives and works in Shanghai.)

Backyard: Hey! Sun is Rising, 2001, 35 mm, sound, black and white, 13' (music: Zhou Qing), no. 1/10.

Yang Fudong is represented by the Marian Goodman Gallery, Paris/New York.

Since the late 1990s Yang Fudong has been making films that explore the transformations of contemporary China. Backyard: Hey! Sun is Rising follows four young Chinese men wearing their Mao suits as, with a degree of mockery, they act out scenes of war and camaraderie and ritual killings. Shot in one of China's mushrooming megacities, the film evokes the continuing presence of traditional beliefs – predicated on a harmonious unity between man and nature – in a society bound for modernity.

24- Hassan Khan (born in 1975 in Cairo, Egypt. Lives and works in Egypt.)

Tabla Dubb no. 9, 2002, Betacam, sound, colour, 3' 40", no. 1/6.

Hassan Khan is represented by Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris.

The work of Hassan Khan draws on the urban realities of Cairo and often blends tradition and modernity. Tabla Dubb no. 9 is an audiovisual performance in which the artist explores the encounter between tabla and electronic music, with video sequences based on his vision of different parts of the city. Tabla Dubb no. 9 shows an empty, poorly lit tunnel, which in fact leads to a mosque. Now and again the image of a man reading in front of his shop and passers-by in the street are superimposed over it. In the background we hear what sounds like a collective prayer, and is in fact a remixed reading of a poem familiar to all Muslims, El borda.

25- Deimantas Narkevicius (born in 1964 in Utena, Lithuania. Lives and works in Vilnius.)

Kaimietis, 2002, Betacam, sound, colour, 19', no. 2/5,

Deimantas Narkevicius is represented by Galerie G&B Agency, Paris, and Galerie Jan Mot, Brussels.

Kaimietis (man of the country) comprises the interwoven stories of two Lithuanians who have never met: a student, whose voice-over describes his recent emigration, and a sculptor who is also about to leave the country. These two stories relate the dilemmas of modern Lithuanian identity. In order to put behind it a painful episode in its history, the government seeks to assert a national identity. However, the statue made by the sculptor in the film reproduces the canons of Soviet Socialist Realism. The camera lingers on this sculpture which embodies the pathos and aesthetic of this period. The new Lithuania is being built with fragments of its past. The equally incongruous music that accompanies the images (Wagner) completes Narkevicius's critical, disenchanting and emotional vision of his country and its history.