



Luc Delahaye

Luc Delahaye has taken photographs for four years from places newspapers report on every day: war zones, areas of conflicts or power struggles, places where "History" is made, at the very moment the events happen. His direct approach reminds one of a reporter. The frontal nature of his photographs, the neutrality, the detachment and the richness in detail that emerge from them relate his work to documentary-style photography. Their size and narrative power connect them to older artistic practices such as those of Gustave Courbet or, more recently, Jeff Wall.

Luc Delahaye sets out to show through photography the state of the contemporary world and to make every image a summary of its events and situations. The "tableau", which is the typical form for independent images, and the size of his photographs are evidences of his will to set apart the image, in a culture dominated by mass media. His work urges a reflection about the relationship between art, history and information.

Contradictory forces operate in his pictures. First, the photographer, taken in a dialectic game, is at the same time absent from himself and present in the world. The very presence in reality he has been looking for coexists with the coldness and distance of his view. Furthermore, his ability to focus on the recording process itself, the primary specificity of photography, paradoxically transcends the "photographic" aspect of the work. Finally, the "unromantic" clarity of the documentary style contradicts but also enhances the dramatic intensity coming from the subject and the spectacular format of the tableau. Despite its apparent visual coherence, the image expresses a nub of formal tensions, aesthetic and political stakes.

Luc Delahaye, interview with Philippe Dagen

That's what I worked on over the years. I had two watchwords: speed and indifference. The quest for the perfect action, pure in its efficacy Getting over anything that constituted an obstacle; attaining – by a form of absence, by a kind of unawareness, may be – to unity with the real. A silent unity. There is something rather beautiful about the practice of photography: it allows the self to be reunited with the world. Only occasionally, though. For me this set of actions whose only finality is their own execution is very clearly a kind of artistic performance.

(...) How does one bear witness to history?

The finest question is, what history? I look at what is around me than others. This hierarchy is the product of what I am, of where I was born. There's no getting away from that, but it is important to be aware of it. Then I have to be prepared to limit myself to what is sufficiently visible, eminently visible.

It's a narrow door, but for me it's the only one. I know that history is not just dates, that it's constantly in motion, slow and subterranean, but the fact is that I work on a property of photography, something only it has. This is its supposed literality. Finally, there is the insignificance of my position. In the field, I do what I can, and that's it. No omniscient vision, no dominant perspective...

(...) Can you say something about this formalization?

The words only come afterwards, after you've found... Being an artist is nothing, or at least, not enough; what you want is to be a poet. You are articulating sounds that are still formless, inventing what looks like a possible route. And yet that is the essence of the thing. All you're ever doing is translating an attitude and rationalizing an intuition, using first of all what is specific to photography. There is the refusal of style and the refusal of style and the refusal of sentimentalism, there is the measuring of the distance that separates me from what I see. There is also the will to be like a servant of the image, of its rigorous demands: to take the camera where it needs to be and to make an image that is subservient neither to the real nor to an intention – for the intention of the moment will always fall short of what you're really looking for. You have to record as many details as possible and achieve an order, without taking away the complexity of the real. To voice the real, and create an image that is a world in itself, with its own coherence, its autonomy and sovereignty: an image that thinks.

(...) So how does your work break down, what is document and what fiction?

The two go together. The document tends towards the imaginary, the fiction tends towards the real. You could say that if you aim at a form of truth through fiction, then the real will become enigmatic precisely because it is obvious. Documentary photography offers an interesting possibility of achieving a poetic form. For me that is more than an interesting possibility, it's what I'm aiming at. If an image is powerful enough, if it resists us, if, by its obscure coherence, part of it escapes our understanding, then it means that something has been won from reality. (© published in *Art Press* in November 2004). Translation Charles Penwarden

Quentin Bajac, "Le regard élargi" [The Wider Gaze] (excerpts)

(...) A supposedly neutral means of capturing reality, the panoramic format may also signal a desire to open the image up to the powers of narrative and the imagination, and to lend these a dramatic dimension, even if meaning becomes blurred in the process. A desire to regard the image as a symbolic whole as well, describing the world not simply in photographic terms but in allegorical ones, too.

(...) As it involves a widening of the field of vision, the panoramic format therefore holds out the promise of capturing reality in a more complex (extended frontality) and unconscious manner (difficulty of controlling the entire field). However, although this open instrument would appear to embody the documentary utopia of neutrality albeit illusory, it also paradoxically reveals itself in retrospect to be the main (double?) agent behind a dramatization of the image. Especially as Delahaye deliberately uses it in this way by "turning up the volume", to borrow Thierry de Duve's comment about Jeff Wall. Like the latter and others since him, the decision to enlarge a print brings the photographer one step closer to



spectacularization – an acknowledgement that we are living in “a cultural environment where small-format paintings and photographs cannot hope to rival the attractiveness of film and advertising”. This spectacularization is particularly potent as the panoramic format turns out not to be so very “neutral” after all. For in an unformulated but nonetheless real way, it recalls another mode of capturing reality: the panorama. Historically linked to the economics of showbusiness, everything about the panorama, from the claim to encapsulate space and the world around us to the notion that imitation can be a form of knowledge, sets it up as the antithesis of the documentary form. Although in terms of scale and dimension Delahaye’s panoramic formats do not have much in common with the monumental and all-embracing panoramas of the 19th century or even with the sometimes excessively large CinemaScope screen, they nevertheless retain a sufficiently evocative interplay of ratios and proportions to remind us of them, giving us the impression that we are standing on the “Balcony of History” – an expression derived from the viewing platform spectators would climb to admire a panorama – and contemplating the world spread out before us. When they are viewed in a series, they come to life and start telling a story. Although it may be full of gaps and be neither objective nor linear, this story nevertheless reinforces the overall narrative dimension. For this reason, Delahaye’s images can be said to be imbued with film, photography’s double that has become our preferred tool for narrating the world – just as painting was in the 19th century.

(...) We are confronted here by a reversal of roles the subversive use of what is actually a narrative and dramatic form (the panoramic format) for documentary purposes; a sort of photographic antonym taking the form of impressive visual paradoxes which paint an impossible picture of the world. For Delahaye, this obscure coherence, played out here in the extended and poetic form of the panorama, combines the limpid attractions of the documentary form with the more obscure temptations of the dramatic form, providing a new opening onto the world but at the same time making meaning more opaque, as though we were seeing through a glass... darkly. (© published in *Les Cahiers du Musée National d'Art Moderne*, July 2005)

Room 1

Jenin Refugee Camp

C-print, 111 x 239 cm

April 14, 2002. The Jenin refugee camp, in the West Bank, after the battle between Palestinian militants and the Israeli Army.

Ordinary Public Consistory

C-print, 111 x 240 cm

October 22, 2003. Basilica of Saint Peter, Vatican. A mass, with pope John Paul II, at the occasion of the ordinary public consistory for the creation of new cardinals.

Taliban

C-print, 111 x 237 cm

November 12, 2001. A Taliban killed in the Shomali valley during the offensive of the Northern Alliance on Kabul.

Security Council

C-print, 112 x 241 cm

February 5, 2003. At the United Nations Security Council in New York, the United States Secretary of State Colin Powell states the case that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction.

Room 2

The Milosevic Trial

C-print, 111 x 238 cm

September 26, 2002. Slobodan Milosevic, former President of Yugoslavia, at the opening of his trial in the trial chamber #3 of the International Crime Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, The Hague, Netherlands.

A Lunch at the Belvedere

Digital C-print, 135 x 290 cm

January 22, 2004. At the Belvedere Hotel in Davos, a lunch organized by the President of Pakistan, Pervez Musharraf, with George Soros, during the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum.

Musenyi

C-print, 123 x 263 cm

April 6, 2004. In the village of Musenyi, district of Muhanga, Rwanda, a burial ceremony for eighty anonymous victims at the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Genocide.

Northern Alliance Fighters

C-print, 111 x 238 cm

November 22, 2001. Northern Alliance fighters in their offensive against the Taleban for the control of the northern Afghan city of Kunduz.

Room 3

Kabul Road

C-print, 111 x 241 cm

November 13, 2001. On the Kabul road, the day the city has been captured by Northern Alliance forces.

Aftermath in Meulaboh

Digital c-print, 175 x 240 cm

January 9, 2005. Aftermath of the tsunami in the city of Meulaboh, Aceh province, Indonesia.

Baghdad II

C-print, 111 x 240 cm

April 5, 2003. US Marines advancing in the outskirts of Baghdad, four days before they reach the center of the city.

George Bush at Concert Noble

C-print, 124 x 267 cm

February 21, 2005. During his European tour, President George W. Bush delivers a foreign policy speech, known as the “new era speech”, at the Concert Noble Ballroom in Brussels.

Room 4

US Bombing on Taliban Positions

C-print, 112 x 238 cm

November 12 2001. Bombing of Taliban positions by a United States B52 plane in the Shomali valley, 30 miles north of the Afghan capital Kabul.

132nd Ordinary Meeting of the Conference

Digital c-print, 138 x 300 cm

September 15, 2004. The 132nd ordinary meeting of the conference of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, at the Vienna headquarters.

Baghdad IV

C-print, 111 x 245 cm

April 13, 2003. The center of Baghdad, four days after the take over of the city by American forces.

Operation Brothers United

Digital c-print, 126 x 256 cm

August 18, 2005. During the disengagement operations in the Gaza Jewish settlement of Neveh Dekalim.

September 11 Memorial

C-print, 111 x 238 cm

September 11, 2002. One year after, the 9/11 commemoration ceremony in New York.



Cinema Prisma Dieter Appelt

Curated by Françoise Paviot

For over thirty years, Dieter Appelt has built up a challenging and personal oeuvre that can just as easily take the form of photography or film as sculpture, drawing or music. Often associated with images of 'actions', such as his **Images of life and death**, 1981, Dieter Appelt is best-known for his photography. Françoise Paviot, who has worked with Dieter Appelt for some ten years, has brought together at la maison rouge pieces which span these different disciplines.

Born in 1935 in Germany, Dieter Appelt lives and works in Berlin. His studies at the Academy of Music in Leipzig and his operatic career as a baritone have influenced his art as much as his time as a student at the Berlin School of Fine Arts. Appointed lecturer at the Berlin University of the Arts in 1982, he has had an uninterrupted artistic career. The Art Institute in Chicago, Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, Guggenheim in New York, Centre National de la Photographie in Paris, SMAK in Ghent, and more recently the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal, have all staged major exhibitions of his work.

After several years during which he left photography for painting, Dieter Appelt decided to devote himself entirely to the image and, from the late 1970s, proclaimed his right to freely choose his mode of action and his determination to avoid the straitjacket of any one medium.

Erste Hängung, 1976 [bottom room], a series conceived in Monte Isola in Italy, announces this new direction. Dieter Appelt uses his sometimes public 'actions' of which he – naked and covered in white powder – is the focus to make films or series of photographs. These are not perceived as mere records of his performances but are intended as works in their own right.

The twelve photographs which open the exhibition illustrate this approach. Their title, **The spot the breath makes on the mirror**, is taken from Raymond Roussel's poem *New Impressions of Africa*. Here, Dieter Appelt photographs his reflection in a mirror, hazed by his own breath.

For the exhibition at la maison rouge, Dieter Appelt used the original 1977 contact print, from which just one image had been made, to produce a further twelve prints. Thus the artist added twelve other moments from the same action to what had been, until then, a single instance, thus adding a new layer of meaning to his work. As Bernd Weyergraf observes, 'the spot on the mirror is programmatic in that it illustrates the photographic [...] paradox. By photographing itself, photography reveals its fundamental principle: to transform the invisible into an image, such as breath which, by fogging the mirror, becomes visible while the reflection becomes blurred.'

This is also when Dieter Appelt read the *Cantos* of the American poet and critic Ezra Pound (1885-1973). In them he discovered the concept of 'vortex' which embraces as much the notion of a whirlwind and aspiration as of a storm.

Dieter Appelt sees perception as being always contaminated by memory, with these two processes constantly overlapping. This whirlwind – this vortex – which Alvin Langdon Coburn developed in photography in the mid-1910s, encouraged new photographic techniques which Dieter Appelt adopted: multiple exposure, breaking-up of the subject, stratification.

In the **Ezra Pound** series, 1981 [balcony], suggestive of a photo-report, Dieter Appelt has shot places where the poet lived in Italy. As in poetic language, individual images are abandoned to instead be viewed in terms of multiple associations and contrasts.

These images also depict the marks of passing time, visible in the dust that has gathered on Ezra Pound's table and amplified by the photographic process. As Michel Frizot notes, '[Dieter Appelt] leaves time for time, fills the emptiness of the instant image with the prolonged exposure of a sensitive matter (the pose), constructs the image layer by layer, like a wall, possibly creating an image from several negatives.'

This desire to depict duration in his photographs led Dieter Appelt to reject the instantaneous image as incapable of feeling and recording time on film.

'What I mean by the influence of time on music or photography is the presence of time in our memory. Why do we remember images or melodies? What makes them last? That you don't forget a photo or a painting you've seen influences your acceptance of that photo or that painting. In other words, the action of time in your body, in your brain, the fact you remember an image, all of that influences the image itself and what you get from it.' Dieter Appelt.

The three hundred and twelve photographs assembled as eight panels, film and three drawings that make up **Forth Bridge-Cinema. Metric Space** (top room), are Dieter Appelt's response to the commission made in 2002 by the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal.

He first visited the site of the Forth Bridge in Scotland in 1976, and drafted what would be an unfinished project for a film. In May 2002 he was able to consult, in the CCA's archives, documents showing the bridge under construction. These photographs, drawings, prints, architect's documents, manuscripts and publications contained a vast body of knowledge covering the different stages in the bridge's construction between 1883 and 1889.

'I have long been fascinated by form, its aesthetic impact and its proportions, and was concerned with how to express all this on film. I wanted to capture different moments, conjunctions and correspondences in autonomous sequences.' Dieter Appelt chose to conceive his work as a combination of seriality and movement, by associating the metric notion of the work of the contemporary composer Iannis Xenakis with the series defined by the thirteenth-century Italian mathematician, Fibonacci.

Borrowing the principles of the large *Tableaux* which he began producing in the 1980s, such as **Übertragung einer Bewegung**, 1983 [top room], Dieter Appelt proposes a reading of the bridge's construction using elements of time, space and form.

Dieter Appelt likens his photography to sculpture whose material is the light he successively deposits on the sensitive photographic paper. 'When I operate a double, triple or centuple exposure on the same negative, the successive layers of light form a sculpture. Systematic works are the same. What you see in **Forth Bridge-Cinema** isn't the Forth Bridge. It's *my* bridge. It's *my* sculpture. To think in terms of images is, for me, absolutely vital.'

The **Wiesent Cinema** series of photographs, 2002 [bottom room] is part of a group of films and photos which Dieter Appelt began in 2001 and continues to work on today with the editing of a 20-minute 16mm film, shown for the first time. The title refers to the River Wiesent, which runs through Northern Bavaria, and to its continuous flow from which the artist has taken these images. Through static and moving images, he continues his exploration, in a perhaps less formal and more sensual way, of the notions of duration, waiting and the very nature of time.

'I'm interested in time as movement. I can shoot several separate images with the camera. If I want to do a self-portrait, for example, while the camera is running and I'm moving my head, the film will capture lots of different serial views. To take a photograph this way is therefore to integrate movement.'

The **Pitigliano** series, 1982 [bottom room] was conceived using a similar process to **Wiesent Cinema**. In addition to a 35mm film, Dieter Appelt has devised a panel of images which he has constructed as a film. Through the repeated gesture of the hand closing the dead man's eyes, he photographs the disappearing gaze. The steel chair opposite the panel is the exact replica of the deceased poet Ezra Pound's chair in San Ambrogio, Italy.

Spiegel Prisma Cinema Machine, 1997 [basement], which gives the exhibition its name, 'is] a sculpture in the form of a polygonal box whose inside is lined with mirrors that reflect the moving film of the River Wiesent [...]. This installation can take two forms: the image is either screened inside the box, or projected outside onto the walls, which transforms the effect. If the image remains inside, it works itself up into a sort of furioso, created by the multiple reflections. The impression on the visitor is that of an endless fall, the sensation of flying.' Dieter Appelt.

With **Glas Skulptur**, 1999 [top room] and **Spiegel Prisma Cinema Machine**, Dieter Appelt has devised two 'reflecting' machines, in both the literal and figurative sense. Both these sculptures, which stand on the floor itself, work with a projector. Veritable 'metaphors' for the image, at once intriguing and provocative, they unleash the spectator's imagination and can be viewed in any number of ways.

'A fugue is an eternal recommencement. In my life and in my work, I go through an experience, I remember it, then I go back to my roots, to my sources. I want to progress step by step, not in leaps and bounds. I keep great control over what I do and how I do it. When I feel I've taken a wrong turn, I go back. Since my youth, perhaps because of what I've lived through, I became aware very early on of the antinomy of birth and death, like a circle. It's our destiny. It's the heart of my work.' Dieter Appelt.

To coincide with the exhibition, **la maison rouge** is screening, in the conference room, a series of films made between 1980 and 2005.

"I make films as films, not as narrations."

Opedette, 1980
Pitigliano Cadenza, 1982
Images of life and death, 1981
Ganz Gesicht, 1982-1983
Sorano I, 1983
Sorano II, 1983
Waldrandabhörung, 1987
Wiesent Cinema, 2005
Ushmac, 1982



view of the exhibition

Spotless Curlet & Donuts

A project chosen and produced by the Association des amis de la maison rouge.

"You've just one problem. You stand too close to the ball... after you've hit it." Golf champion Sam Snead.

François Curlet conceives his work as a disconcerting response to a given reality. To hand over the patio to him was to expose this space to the critical eye of an artist always on the lookout for signs and symbols which he expands on by drawing out their underlying significance.

Curlet & Donuts were drawn to the correspondence between *la maison rouge*'s physical aspect and its function. A private foundation that shows private collections, an association of friends who are also art-lovers, a house as a symbol, and the clubhouse atmosphere of the terrace of which the patio is an extension... different factors which incited them to explore the dual language of art and leisure which they perceive here. This 'playground' can just as easily be a green as an exhibition space, both of which welcome an initiated circle.

Spotless transforms the patio into a showroom for golf carts, an invitation to a static stroll around a green with no holes, a space with no purpose in the middle of a defined circuit. A bronze tee stuck in one of the walls surrounding the patio awaits the collector's chosen artwork. Through its immaculacy, **Spotless** seeks to strike the viewer with the same force and speed as a club striking the ball.

Through **Spotless**, the artists ironize about the upmarket nature of certain art venues and the snobbishness of 'connoisseurs', members of the elite and authorities on taste. Using a constant to-and-fro between golfers' specialist jargon and that of the art world, they evoke the asymmetric relationship between collector and artist, the former indulging his 'hobby' without revealing his private or professional world, while the latter lays himself bare.

François Curlet

Born in 1967 in Paris, François Curlet lives and works in Bazouges, France.

His most recent solo shows are:

2005: *Coconutour* (Santa Monica Centre, Barcelona);
Coconutour & Willy Wonka (Fri-Art, Fribourg)
2004: *Papillon minute* (Micheline Szwajcer, Antwerp);
Crème de singe, with Donuts (Nuit Blanche, Le Printemps, Paris)
2003: *Électricité* (Galerie Air de Paris, Paris)

Donuts

Anne Franssen, Nathalie Wathelet, Olivier Vandervliet.
 Graphic Design, Brussels: <www.donuts.be>