TEXT //
RADOUAN ZEGHIDOUR

GENERAL BIOGRAPHY RADOUAN ZEGHIDOUR

Radouan Zeghidour was born in Paris in 1989, where he presently lives and works. Zeghidour graduated from the Paris School of Fine Arts in 2016. The young artist has actively participated in group shows such as the 68th edition of *Jeune Création*, in 2018, and *Nos ombres devant nous* at the Fondation Ricard in 2017. He has also held many solo exhibitions, such as *Hypogea* et the Catinca Tabacaru Gallery, New-York, in 2016, and *LXXV Chants de Sirènes*, at the Yamamoto Keiko Rochaix Gallery, London, in 2019, along with the *Salon de Montrouge* during that same year. Radouan Zeghidour was awarded the *Prix Thaddaeus Ropac* in 2014 and the *Prix Felicita* by the Paris School of Fine Arts, in 2017.

GENERAL WORK RADOUAN ZEGHIDOUR

To embrace the contemporary metropolis, is to experience an unnatural life. To the first widness, open and virgilian, an arid cement decor has been substituted. On the concrete desert, the faintness of Man and the discomfort of soul flourish. Those who walk on the pavement, shall taste the violence of the anonymity, a paradox of the fellow who becomes invisible as long as he exposes himself.

The city suffocates, oppresses.
Seulement voilà. So. In the depths of the city, I discovered dream spaces, hidden fortresses, out of time. I took baths of silence, each time perfumed by the tipsyness of privilege and the fear of being surprised. Discreetly, in the realm of the forbidden, I drank of springs, intoxicating as they were secret, the doors, padlocks and chains to break, assured me of their authenticity. The awake senses, eyes wide open to hear better, I have immersed myself in those places without weariness, and without ceasing.

In the heart of these hypogeums, I sculpted the dark, realized in emergency nameless structures, fragile and ephemeral installations. I was the only one to see them, to live them, and I tried to preserve them, saving them from oblivion. From memories to vestiges, from images to collected scraps, I realize the archeology of the abandonned places, testify of disappeared artworks, and the exprience of their loss, but also of these contemporary cata- bases, which give to live the non-visible, the wandering and the forbidden.

Radouan Zeghidour

SPLEEN LE MAUDIT a solo show by Radouan Zeghidour

October 16th - November 20th 2021

Paris.

On the millenary cobblestones saturated with cameras, heightened individuals are now beeping everywhere. Not only at work, but also in cafés, trains and hospitals. In this dull décor, a sad, awkward, antisocial, solitary outsider wanders about in search of paradise lost.

Legend says he is a direct descendent of Quasimodo. An unfortunate-looking character with an atrabilious temperament, filthy hair and a spleen that takes up so much room in his stomach that his belly always looks swollen. However, this fatally degraded being seemingly doomed by destiny has finally lived his hour of glory thanks to a passion one could qualify as unusual, and which in his case resembles a nervous tick. He writes anywhere, on anything and at any time. Some call him the Destructor, but he calls himself the *Graphomaniac*, a compulsive, talentless writer. Pacing up and down the millenary cobbled streets of Paris with a heart weighed down by relentless melancholia, claws clutched around a feather pen he calls his little prosthesis, cherishing and cajoling it with the most candid devotion, Spleen wanders about in search of impossible landscapes and forgotten lands. With a tearful eye and closed fist, nostalgic for the lost charm of Paris, he endlessly curses the Rastignacs and Gaudissards of this century, those terrible beings who took away his muse. Oh indignant Muse ! She remorselessly sold herself to the highest bidder, the most grotesque: the youth of open-spaces and avocado toast who crush the soul of Paris with their chintzy dreams, with all the characteristics of the disquieting fervour of dynamic young leaders. To hell with them! Too obsessed by his craze and ruminations against a world of lumens and lost photons, Spleen the Damned, like an eternal disaster obsessed by failure (he collects these experiences like triumphs in a herbarium of defeats in which he takes much pride), hadn't noticed that his landscape had changed. His city had been transformed. In a short time, surveillance had taken over, and with it, the venin of despotically distilled denunciation.

In a single year, the décor had changed. What am I saying ? The world had changed ! The worst predictions of dystopian stories had come true. Prosaically. In a single year we now live with smart cameras that detect those who go unmasked, drones fly over beaches searching for strollers, codes are established by the best techniques of cryptology and distributed under medical conditions to allow people to move about, take care of themselves or simply drink a cappuccino ! As always, alas !, only the eternal rogues and their legendary blindness are incapable of understanding. But for the rest of us, hell ! How dark has the sky become ! Technological meshing has reached out its wings like the most abominable of the Titans and this frightful chimera has a name: *Surveillance*. Its tentacular expansion has triumphed over our existence. Nevertheless, Titans never come alone and this one has brought along his equally monstrous sister, a sordid nymph of legendary ugliness, an atrocious villain ! – who goes by the gentle name of *Denunciation*.

Inquisitors are aplenty and divide the shares of vigilance between themselves: we denounce our neighbour, we denounce the tagger, and we denounce the non-injected. And while these different guilds espouse the city, Spleen, bearing the weight of his hunchback, is hunted down for his illicit writings. The hunters of inscriptions on his heels, the season is open for the clandestine corpus, cameras drawn like bows and arrows, with the informers set on slaughtering the animal, eradicating the monster, and putting an end to such vermin for once and for all !

However, Spleen is blind to all this, intent on declaiming his flame, endlessly tattooing the millenary body of his stone muse who has always remained impassive, faithful to the muteness of ungrateful women. And while he wanders, groups have set off on the manhunt, tracking him down in order to denounce him and push him onto the public stage, just like his ancestor Quasimodo burned at the stake, his godfather Villon sent to the gallows and his example, Balzac, thrown into jail ! Along with his secret loves Marius Jacob and Dostoyevsky, exiled in penal colonies. The mob has started to hunt down his writings, to collect them in order to destroy them. *Fahrenheit* ? *The Lives of Others* ? Not quite but almost !

Spleen, the cursed hunchbacked writer, runs through the streets of Paris, maybe you've crossed his path, drawn and haggard with his little bump, ardent heart and generous palm, befriending the rats and feeding the pigeons, dragging along his ball and chain worn like a crown, henceforth without pen and ink. Mad and bewildered, he keeps on running, screaming to whomever the end of the game for him and his brothers, and all the hatred of this new world !

Ever since, he has departed on the traces of his ancestor, with an obscure, old-fashioned circus in an industrial city. He has sent us a paving stone, a book of spells and a sealed trunk as a testimony to his work and the outcome of this new world, all of which it is now our turn to decipher.

Radouan Zeghidour
Translated in English by Emmelene Landon

SAINTE CHAPELLE a solo show by Radouan Zeghidour

October12th - November 16th 2019

Cité, the largest of the Parisian islands, has been radically transformed in the space of a year. One badly extinguished cigarette butt, and the millenary forest went up in flames. When the High Court of Paris was relegated to the Porte de Clichy, the oldest judicial body disappeared: the Palais de la Cité, whose dungeons imprisoned Marie-Antoinette, Robespierre, Ravachol and all the other anonymous accused or condemned Parisians. The Palais still bears the scars of those times, like an archaeological museum of broken laws. The corridors and waiting benches are marked by their passages: places of limbo saturated with inscriptions, drawings, crypts and engraved signatures which can be read as a last testament prior to sentencing.

There used to be a curious cohabitation in the Palais: the Sainte Chapelle and the Prison, the Crown of Thorns like a halo over the cells several metres below, and the fragment of the "True Cross" juxtaposing the guillotine. Today, queues of believers and tourists armed with cameras face the queues of defendants, grasping onto their.
Forgiveness and punishment were united in the same Palais, whose bells either announced an Office or a Sentence. Hooded people were brought together, be they monks or prisoners. In French, *capuche* (hood) and *chapel(le)* come from the same Latin root: *Cappa*.

The German translation of Dostoevsky's *Prestupleniye i Nakazanye* is *Crime and Redemption*. From *The House of the Dead* to *Demons*, Dostoevsky tirelessly demonstrated that salvation stems from the depths of perdition.
Nihilist debauchery, *femmes fatales*, pathological liars, incorrigible alcoholics and their sudden ruin, cancelled marriages or suicide almost always lead to Christ.

But it was another novel that was revived by the fire of Notre Dame, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* by Victor Hugo, in which he described the Court of Miracles, where beggars and thieves took refuge at nightfall. The miracle being that the blind recovered their sight and the crippled their ability to walk. Centuries passed, and this Court, like a Phoenix, was reborn from its ashes.

"*LA SAPEL PORTE DE LANFER*" ("La Sapel" for "La Chapelle", the door of hell) is a tag written in yellow on a motorway interchange bordering the Capitol.
Porte de la Chapelle, a court with no miracles, where refugees and drug addicts replace the sickly and the *coquillards*, and crack dealers steal the throne of the King of Truands.
Porte de la Chapelle, the threshold beyond which the City of Light has deported its scraps of darkness. Every evening, an ark of subhumanity sets sail, only to be stranded on a promise: Rue de l'Évangile, where the last Calvary of the Portes de Paris sits enthroned, mute, with a frozen gaze.

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Radouan Zeghidour
Translated in English by Emmelene Landon

LXXV SWANS AT THE END OF THE NIGHT

There is a swan song that drives you into an exile in the night.
From Orpheus rushing after Eurydice into the hell, to Stavrogin wandering through his demons, to respond to this call is to see the chasms that grow in abundance.
From physical nights to existential nights, the abyss is suspended on the verges where nobody goes beyond, and those who succumb, fall.
And lower one falls, brighter the smallest of photons illuminates, so here, the intensity of one's salvation is measure by the depth of the perdition.
Diving into the night, it is to walk beyond, literally, to trans-gress, or walk-beyond.
Out of the way, out-law, we venture to see, to know.
Sink oneself deeper into the dark and to be lost at the end of the night, with the only torch of desire to walk beyond, is to see in the trace of one's footsteps, hatch timidly, the Romanticism Caillera or the Scum Romanticism.

Radouan Zeghidour

RADOUAN ZEGHIDOUR: LXXV CHANTS DE SIRÈNES

7th June - 1st August 2019

Private view and opening reception: 6th June 2019, 6pm

Yamamoto Keiko Rochaix presents the second solo exhibition of Radouan Zeghidour at the gallery with the installations using a wide range of media including metal, plaster, wax, photography and video.

The works of the emerging artist are deeply rooted in the idea of travelling, the desire to travel, and to travel to somewhere unknown into an abyss from where there may not be a way to return. Zeghidour explores deep into the night, often illicitly, locations uncharted in the maps for the unadventurous, as if in search of making act of transgression or in search of himself. The drive for these nocturnal quests is essentially existential, leading him to delve into the past civilisations real and imagined and their ruins, all conjured up in the underworld of the city after hours when all the mortals and their activities are effaced into oblivion.

The installations for the current exhibition offer us a glimpse of this complex universe that is somewhere between physical and metaphysical. 'Jardin Secret', a work representing a gate to the world beyond, is a large semi-transparent panel with three sections supported by metal chassis. The middle section features plaster bas-relief of elegant Classical figures, below which is a photo of an industrial, gigantic and rusty machinery found somewhere underground Paris, printed on an equally industrial metal sheet. The two images are surrounded by subtle, almost invisible, poetic shades of flowers created by emboss of the finely- woven metal mesh, gracefully celebrating the improbable but perfectly harmonised match of the two fundamentally incompatible worlds, idealised image of the past on one hand, and brutal reality of the society we live in on the other. The two spheres with properties far removed from each other merge and form a seamless whole -- and the emotional integrality that Zeghidour infuse to the work makes such blend and the resulting cosmos entirely convincing.

The oeuvre's nod to the sombre state of being may have been inspired by the novels such as 'Journey to the End of the Night' of Louis-Ferdinand Céline, 'Demons' of Dostoevsky, or the legend of Orpheus and Eurydice, all of which could be described as accounts of dark or tenebrous. Nonetheless, the world of 1/2
Radouan Zeghidour is not that of a despair or nihilism, but a highly emotional and personal take of life tangible and intangible, lined with a sense of pursuit for something to look up to through self-reflection. The young artist's oeuvre exude hope and anticipation however fragile they may be. In this context his works resonate with Romanticism as the artist rightly claims, and they indeed incarnate a Romantic view of the 21st Century urban society. It also leads us to believe that his very personal voyages in the dark of night, unconsciously, are driven by the quest for ideal and self realisation.

Yamamoto Keiko Rochaix Gallery

MEMENTO MORI - REMEMBER YOU WILL DIE
ESSAY BY KRISTINE MACMICHAEL

on the exhibition 'LXXV Chants de Sirènes' of Radouan Zeghidour

The etymology of the phrase *memento mori* goes something like this: in ancient Rome, when a victorious general returned from battle, the adoring masses would cheer for him as he drove his chariot down the Via Sacra for his *triumphus* parade. For the entire day, a child would accompany the general, whispering in his ear over and over again: "*Hominem te esse. Memento mori.*" ("You are only a man. Remember you will die"). The role of the *memento mori* chant was to protect the general from vainglory because it is fleeting: one day he too will die. In a similar vein, contemporary visual manifestations of *memento mori* symbols in art remind the viewer that they will one day die; these symbols alert us to the brevity of life and the transience of vanity. The work in Radouan Zeghidour's current exhibition at Yamamoto Keiko Rochaix, entitled *LXXV Chants de Sirènes*, reminds us, in both whispers and in shouts, that one day we will cease to exist.

Memories of the past and ideas of death abound in Zeghidour's exhibition. My first inkling that this exhibition forefronts notions of death comes from the exhibition title itself: *LXXV Chants de Sirènes*. It conjures up associations to Homer's epic tale of *The Odyssey* when the irresistible sirens' song lured Odysseus's sailors to the perilous rocky coastlines of Sirenum scopuli. Shipwrecked, the sailors would be overtaken by amnesia and meet their demise.

The objects composing many of Zeghidour's works are purposefully ephemeral and therefore are designed to slowly decay and disappear. So, in a way, the artwork's material silently communicates the exhibition's message about death and memory; the ephemeral materiality symbolises the frailty of both the physical and existential human condition. I am thinking of *Rupture*, a silicone imprint of ancient graffiti left by the 18th century French writer, Nicolas Edme Restif de la Bretton, on a pillar in Places des Vosges. It reads, '1764 NICOLAS'. Keiko Yamamoto, the founder of Yamamoto Keiko Rochaix, quipped that Restif is "the patron saint of graffiti artists." *Rupture* is not only an indexical trace of the past (the direct imprint of Restif's graffiti) but also contains, within its material structure, the dust and debris that has witnessed the city's history. When Zeghidour removed the silicone from the pillar anchoring the graffiti, most of the dirt and soot that had accumulated in the inscription was lifted off and encased in the silicone material. Thus, the actual physical traces of the past which make up this specific site in Paris is incorporated into the work. *Rupture* exists in the present, but it is made *of* memory and the past within its ephemeral materiality, its content, and, ultimately, its message.

I also think about time and memory when I approach *Jardin Secret*. The work is composed of a rustic, translucent screen of delicate metal mesh that is situated within a tall, basic support. The screen is divided into three sections and the mesh anchors the objects housed within the work's structure. The metal mesh in the top section contains subtle imprints of floral designs and secures the wax mould of a circular decorative relief sculpture that adorns the side of an old building. The middle section houses a white, fragmented plaster cast of a bas-relief sculpture. The figures appear to be situated within a classical architectural setting and dressed in the attire of the ancient Romans: long, flowing *tunicas*, *pallas*, and *stolas*. The remnants of the word, 'CONCLVSVS', meaning 'enclosed', appears in the bottom right corner.

Both the top and middle sections represent the decline of an ancient civilization. However, the cast we see in this piece is the copy of a copy. What I mean is that this image has its origins in ancient sculpture but was subsequently reproduced in the 19th century, most likely by a student at Beaux-Arts de Paris. So Zeghidour's work houses a reproduction of a reproduction. What does it mean when an artist deliberately reproduces a reproduction? Rochaix said that Zeghidour's work comments on the nostalgia for classical civilisation; what is represented is not a direct copy of the ancient culture, but "the artist is representing the made-up, desired idea of paradise." She found the heart of the work. When an artist copies a copy, the viewer is forced to do the work of memory because any direct link to the past is no longer located in the object itself. *Jardin Secret* highlights a temporal distortion in that both the past and present co-mingle in the same work simultaneously. In this mode of contemporary memory, time becomes ambiguous and therefore polysemic, allowing for a multiplicity of interpretations. Belatedness becomes a characteristic of Zeghidour's work: the past haunting the present. Ancient memories and narratives play a diminished role since they are reconstituted to the demands and desires of the present.

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The lower section is intriguing because it juxtaposes those plaster copies of copies alongside a photographic image that symbolises contemporary urban society and culture, and this is the main message behind the exhibition: *memento mori* symbols as harbingers of the inevitable decline of our contemporary society. The metal mesh in the lower section is, again, imprinted with floral and geometric decorative designs as seen in the top section. On either side of a tattered-looking metal sheet, that also shows signs of decay through oxidation, sit two disintegrating plaster casts of ancient sculptures of mens' faces. Embedded onto the metal sheet is a colour photograph of an enormous ventilation fan – the industrial architectural that makes up the underbelly of large contemporary cities, such as Paris. *Jardin Secret* equates, through proximity, the remnants of an ancient, dead culture with the imagery of present-day subterranean industrial architecture. The former has already slid into the collective memory of the past whilst the latter is forewarned of its eventual demise.

Other works in this exhibition are also understood as *memento mori* symbols. The simple tin- metal wall-hanging sculpture, entitled *LXXV Chants de Sirènes*, is, by its rectangular geometric shape which comes to a point at the top, reminiscent of traditional memorial shrines. The metal is inscribed with writing and the work's title, *LXXV Chants de Sirènes*. Memorial shrines strongly evoke collective and personal memory of the dead and the past. The shrine, which also displays oxidation and decay, is embedded with a similar colour photograph as seen in *Jardin Secret*. However, rather than a photograph of contemporary industrial architecture, the photograph in *LXXV Chants de Sirènes* is of the timeworn, derelict tower. The image is arresting because it so powerfully proves that abandonment and the passing of time has allowed a large tree to protrude so unrepentantly out of the building's dilapidated outer shell. The memorial shape of the work's overall structure with the colour photograph embedded in the metal material powerfully points to death, the passing of time, and remembrance of a past which has now been forgotten.

Then there are the marble fragments, entitled *Martys*, that represent archaeological remains that testify to a long-gone civilisation, as well as to anonymous saints who were persecuted and perished for their beliefs. These fragments are displayed in a way that is usually encountered in cultural and antiquities museum displays and exhibitions. This work is about memory of forgotten civilisations; it speaks through the voice of the past but portends death as our future. As those people and cultures were once great, we and our Western culture are great now, but as they are now dead and resigned to the past, one day we will be remembered only through our fragmented remnants. Our art, our architecture, our names, our culture, and our memories follow their footsteps down the path toward death and forgetfulness. *Martys* whispers in our ear: *memento mori*.

The message of death in *Evasion* is more optimistic: out of death springs new life. This work is about resurrection. It is composed of a large copper metal sheet that looks as if it slid down the wall and rests on the floor. Like the metal sheets in *Jardin Secret* and *LXXV Chants de Sirènes*, *Evasion* shows signs of corrosion due its patina of oxidation. On the top half of the sheet is a colour photograph embedded into the metal. The photograph is a still from the video documenting Zeghidour's underground installation, also entitled *Evasion*. The photograph presents what looks like prison bars securing a cavernous cage. In the middle of the photograph, behind the metal bars, hangs a loose canvas which gently sways with the artificial breeze emanating from the underground industrial ventilation system. Zeghidour's video installation of *Evasion* shows a man painting black flowers on the canvases as a way to install a natural landscape in subterranean Paris. The yellow outline echoes the frame of the canvas.

The installation *Evasion* no longer exists, or more precisely, it presumed the work will be destroyed once discovered. But the installation version of *Evasion* represents an important aspect to Zeghidour's artistic practice: the artist searching, for weeks and sometimes months, for hidden, underground, and illicit locations in Paris. These sites are deliberately inaccessible to the public, even though they exist in the heart of subterranean Paris. Zeghidour is, "Driven by a nostalgia for another time, it is in places difficult to access, prohibited to the public, that we can touch the pleasures of loneliness, silence, and isolation. Underground, where no one goes." 1

In one day, the artist gathers the detritus and materials found at the site to construct the work. Once the work is finished, he documents it through photographs and video footage. These recordings become the only evidence that testifies to the work's existence. In effect, the photographs and videos are the remnants of the original work. But by the time we see these remnants resurrected into subsequent works, the original artwork has already been destroyed; it no longer exists.

Evasion, the one in the current exhibition, recycles the photographic still from the video of the earlier work. So, whilst *Evasion* houses a photographic still from the earlier work that no longer exists – one can think of it as a 'dead' work – the remnants of the earlier work is resurrected in a new version of *Evasion*. I think of Georges Bataille's idea of the General Economy when viewing this artwork. In *The Accursed Share: An Essay on the General Economy*, Bataille put forth the idea that death and destruction are necessary for the growth of new life. He wrote that "Just as in space the trunks and branches of the tree raise the superimposed stages of the foliage to the light, death distributes the passage of the generations over time. It constantly leaves the necessary room for the coming of the newborn, and we are wrong to *curse the one without whom we would not exist*." *Evasion* comments on hope in the face of death: the resurrection of the dead brought back to life in a new form.

The exhibition also involves Zeghidour's recent short film entitled *Voyage au bout de la Nuit* (*Journey to the End of the Night*). The film takes its title from the (in)famous novel of 1932 by French writer Louis-Ferdinand Céline. The novel is understood as semi-autobiographical, deeply misanthropic, and soaked in "a sense of failure, acute anxiety, nihilism", and inertia. Its main themes focus on time and death, both collective and individual, and has "become a mirror image of many in today's society." 2 This description of the novel also applies to Zeghidour's film. It shows a graffiti artist dressed in black with a balaclava shielding his identity. He walks like a haunting spectre through Paris, observing and absorbing all that surrounds him. Next, we see him sitting at a long table in the dark, lit by candles as he writes 'to the end' on a piece of paper 'DU BOUT DU BOUT DU BOUT' over and over again, endlessly. The vigorous repetition of the phrase communicates a memento mori scream more than a whisper.

The film pauses momentarily, then reveals the graffiti artist, still dressed in black, moving swiftly through an empty Paris Metro station. He is carrying an industrial-sized high-pressure spray paint tank and long spray gun. Like the ceaseless reminders of *memento mori* in the general's ear, the artist writes on the station walls and advertising displays, over and over again, 'DU BOUT DU BOUT DU BOUT' - the end, the end, the end. We are a witness to him writing about the end, scarring the city in tall, spray-painted letters that shout, 'DU BOUT DU BOUT DU BOUT'. Our journey to the end of the night takes us through the empty Parisian cityscape as we follow the artist vandalising the city with his incessant *memento mori*, foretelling of our unavoidable collective and personal demise.

Kristine MacMichael

1 https://radouanzeghidour.com/EVASION
2 Knapp, B., "Reviewed Work: Journey to the End of the Night by Louis-Ferdinand Céline, Ralph Manheim", The Modern Language Journal, vol. 67, no. 3 (Autumn, 1983), pp. 284-285. Both quotations are drawn from this review.

ARTICLE BY WENDY GABET, Jeune Création, May 10th 2018

Radouan Zeghidour's fondness for the city of Paris makes for a refreshingly selfless artistic stance. His work is based on real experiences, accounts and traces of his travels through the city's many levels. Although he views his surroundings through a romantic lens, there is a certain tension between the poetry and violence of illegal actions, such as his inaccessible and ephemeral constructs in the under- ground tunnels of Paris. His sculptures are an account of his shared history with the city "increase the range of your freedom in order to create as best as possible" is his motto.

Wendy Gabet

RADOUAN ZEGHIDOUR: JIAN

12th January – 23rd February 2017

Private view and opening reception: 11th January 2017, 6pm

This January artist Radouan Zeghidour presents his first solo show in England at the Yamamoto Keiko Rochaix gallery, offering visitors a remarkable encounter with the past and the present, with traces of what has been and an intimation of things that may never-yet-come-to be. His work presents a series of pieces that explore an archaeology of forgetting. His works are composed of memory, fragment and monument, created through sculptures that are at once forbidden discoveries made in subterranean spaces and fragmented remembering's of past places that present a veiled, temporal encounter with forgotten spaces and objects as they intersect with our present.

Zeghidour said: "The title for the exhibition comes from a Chinese legendary bird, the Jian, which has only one wing, and only one eye. To be able to fly, he must find a companion, since it is only with two birds together, that they will have two wings, two eyes, and thus will be able to move. This legendary bird evokes a lot, love, the idea of the couple, the need to bond with others. But also, and this is what I see in relation to the exhibition here, something that [...] represents the need for the present to feed on the past in order to be able to fly to the future."

Radouan Zeghidour's practice encompasses a diverse range of references and media - drawing on his attraction towards the dark and forgotten spaces of Paris. The sculptures made in these spaces are ephemeral, hidden installations, often built with the materials found on site. Many of his works are clandestine and illegal; destroyed every time they are found, and existing only as pictures, fragments, memories and video works. Mythological themes tie into his practice, which emerges from the underworld to the surface, different, changed and full of secrets. Building on these lost and hidden temporal works, Jian plays with the idea of ruins: the ruins of the past, the ruins of the present and the imaginary ruins of a future time. These works of imagined ruin, restored memory and archaeological (re) creation are constructed in various materials, from bas-reliefs, to monumental architectural sculptures evoking the doors, and structures of the subterranean, here constructed in polystyrene, polished aluminium, plaster and cement. The final works in the show are composed of found objects and fragile matter, arranged under a Clepsydra, so that they disappear from the gallery little by little; sculptures torn from dark spaces, slowly fading in the light – material dissolving into memory.

Keiko Rochaix, the gallerist and curator of Jian, says of Zeghidour's works: "Grossly primitive and infinitely precious at the same time, his works are visually grasping, hitting the viewer at first sight. And that is before one digs into the conceptual sides of the body of his oeuvres; all the works are held together by almost enigmatic, other- worldly notions. Radouan's talent as a visual artist is that he recreates/produces unearthly ideas with such base, physical, tangible materials. And that is exactly what you see in Jian: the notion of ephemerality, somehow physically present in the space of the Gallery."

Zeghidour's previous works include the solo shows Hypogea, at the Galerie Catinca Tabacaru, New-York in 2016; DNAP, at Beaux-arts de Paris, France in 2014 and Heterotopie, Beaux-Arts de Paris, France in 2013 all of which question ideas of the hidden, the obscure, the forbidden, the ephemerality of things and the prevalence of the ruin or the fragment in relation to society and its many identities and constructed memories. He has also participated in several group shows, including Explorers I, Loft 19, Galerie Suzanne Tarasiève, Paris, and Explorers II, Londonewcastle Project Space, London, both in 2016. He was born in 1989, he lives and works in Paris, a city that has enmeshed itself in many of his works. He graduated from the Beaux-Arts de Paris in 2016 and received the Thaddaeus Ropac prize in 2014.

Yamamoto Keiko Rochaix Gallery

RADOUAN ZEGHIDOUR: JIAN ESSAY BY MEG BOULTON

Radouan Zeghidour is an artist of and out of time. The series of pieces on display at Yamamoto Keiko Rochaix explore an archaeology of forgetting and a construction of memories that at once are and never were, presented though a series of sculpted works that guide you around and through the space of the gallery, in a manner
that evokes the artist's process of making work. The pieces in Jian present object identities that speak of fragments, of found objects and of encountered places
now lost, acting as both memory and monument of the artist's experiences and his forbidden discoveries, here made manifest for a public gaze. The works presented
in Jian nd their inspiration in Zeghidour's private explorations and wanderings in
the subterranean, abandoned, illicit spaces of Paris, performing in the gallery as the remembered record of the past objects and places discovered and created by the artist, now presented for our experience as we shadow his footsteps through his work.

Zeghidour's sculptures provide a veiled, temporal encounter with the forgotten, the prohibited and the abandoned, enlivening the hidden spaces and abject objects of his uncovering, unveiling them, remembering and remaking them - allowing them to intersect with our present in the space of the gallery. In a wide-ranging, nuanced practice that encompasses a diverse range of referents and media, the works are ephemeral and shifting, comprising gigantic structures and beguiling surfaces, all with an elegant and intuitive attention to the material qualities of both the original encounter and the (re)made, remembered objects displayed here.

Ruin and Myth are both here in the gallery, informing our engagement with the works, glimpsed through these created objects and structures that look to a classical tradition and emerge from an intense interest and pleasure in the ruined, the forgotten or the left-behind. We are now in a place of lost things, refound. The forms in the show, like the mythological narratives that inform the artist, emerge from the underworld of his exploration to shape our encounter with them in the space of the gallery; appearing different, changed and full of secrets, offering hidden, runic maps and elided ripples from which to begin our own exploration. Building on the lost
and the hidden, resonating with the temporal works Zeghidour creates in his wider practice under the Parisian streets, Jian plays with the idea of fragment and ruin: presenting a series of works that explore "Ruins of the Past, Ruins of the Present" and imaginary "Ruins of the Future".

Keiko Rochaix, the gallerist and curator of Jian, says of Zeghidour's art:
"Grossly primitive and in nitely precious at the same time, his works are visually grasping, hitting the viewer at rst sight. And that is before one digs into the conceptual sides of the body of his oeuvres; all the works are held together by almost enigmatic, other-worldly notions. Radouan's talent as a visual artist is that he recreates /produces unearthly ideas with such base, physical, tangible materials. And that is exactly what you see in Jian: the notion of ephemerality, somehow physically present in the space of the Gallery."

The ephemeral quality noted by Rochaix is unavoidable here – Zeghidour's work offers an embodied, sculpted encounter with ideas of the past and the future, presenting traces of what has been, alongside an intimation of things that may never yet come to be. These works display a complex relationship between time, substance and memory, realised through objects and through surface – seen in form, and inscribed in the detail of his works. His sculptures emerge, Persephone-like, from the subterranean spaces that feed and inform his creative practice, works torn from dark spaces, slowly fading in the light – material dissolving into memory before our gaze.
Out of this body of work the pieces envisioned by the artist as the "Ruins of the Past" are perhaps particularly intriguing as they play with ideas of art and artist, making and meaning – apposite considerations for a show concerned with themes of reclamation and destruction, desecration and memory, object and time. The sculptures, "Nec Hemo" and "Ekpurosis", both made in 2016, are bas-relief panels, created from old and abandoned sculptures the artist discovered in the underground basement of the school of the Beaux-Arts in Paris during his studies. The original objects in this subterranean storehouse date from a period of art making that relied on the classical copy – learning to make through the repeated process of remaking, resulting in a plethora of classical (re)constructions now long-forgotten in the studio practice of today, copied works shrouded in obscurity and placed out of sight.

Zeghidour describes nding these works in the basement of the École, “full of dust and partly destroyed”. Taking these found objects he then took moulds from the classical copies, working with this unauthorized collection without permission, reworking them, transforming them, adding complex layers to their borrowed forms. Like much of his other work, these pieces are clearly, in part, an archaeological exercise, extracted as they are from the past methods and traditions of the School, here replicated and transformed from shadowy, forgotten objects into something new, something other, something else.

Their forms are intriguing, their Classicized origins at once present and presented. The frieze form of the original is (re)presented here in the black and white iterations of surface that preserve the running forms of the gures, and their columnated environment, presenting them in their fragmented and partial state, remaking them in a new narrative that at once remembers the grandeur and struggle of their artistic origin and acknowledges the abasement of their current state. During the making of these works the artist used latex to mould the original sculpted blocks; in the process inadvertently stripping these abandoned forms of the layers of dust and dirt that had collected on their surfaces; impregnating his subsequent casts with the visceral traces and molecular memories of these forlorn artistic remnants, that were then transformed with layers of pigment, and fabric, and wax and canvas and resin, that at once echo and obscure these dusty originals. Their surfaces perform differently for the viewer, one, as barrier, the other as window; asking us, as viewers, to look, and to look through.

The Classical gures, the frieze form that contains them, the traditions that informed their original construction and their current emplacement are all here, in the works and in the gallery space with us, (re)called into being through Zeghidour’s sculptures. These are twinned works, speaking of forgotten making and ruined objects, reminding us of the destruction of the Classical world, of the violent sackings, breakings and eruptions that infamously disrupted the cool, draped perceptions of calm, rational, civilization; historical toga-strewn phantasms constructed and then deconstructed in the mind’s eye in the moment it takes to absorb the blacked patina and fragmented form of “Ekpurosis”; but here, also, amid the frantic and mobile haste of this imagined historical ight, where the sculpted surface acts as an echoic simulacra of the forlorn and immobile Beaux-Arts objects, here recast as work, but also there – abandoned, forever resting out of sight underneath the (art) world above. The layers of wax, resin, pigment, patina and polystyrene added to the moulded form are compelling, causing and creating breaks in the facture of the work; forming eddies, speckles, drifts, pools – spaces that arrest the eye and defy the narrative form of the original. In following the gures along the frieze, one is liable to visually fall into a slick of wax, or to stick, captive, in the be-speckled patina caught on the draped and outlined shoulder of a gure, or blown, dusted down the striations of a column. These layers, interleaved over form are timeless, and beyond time, they halt the narrative of the piece, and the experience of viewing it, an anachronic pause that murmurs of a larger, lost chronology.

The blacked pigments, and dust-specked surface of “Ekpurosis” creates the impression of a rush of gures scrambling out of the rubble of a destroyed world, a ruin of the Classical ideal, a ripple of a long-gone, world-ending disaster, preserved in the patina of the piece, which melts and glides and puddles, while also presenting an eschatological episteme of nineteenth century art-making. Here, in the gallery, it becomes an artistic marker, a grave-stone if you will; at once acting as classical corpse and as a memorial monument that is an unwilling witness to its own end(ing). “Nec Hemo,” on the other hand, presents a rather different narrative to our eyes, white and shrouded, veiled, hidden. Where the surface of “Ekpurosis” is dark, mobile, frantic, patinaed and stained with the detritus of history, and dark, deep striations of colour, and form and substance, this piece is static and cool – asking us to look though the veiled gures, past the intimated surface texture and beyond the shadowed history of the object to the narrative layers beneath. This is a process of viewing that replicates the process of carving and casting that produced this sculpture and its model, as well as the archaeological methodologies that prompted the artistic impulse to nd and revive these abandoned pieces from their obscure places, yet, perversely, impelled the artist to keep them draped, veiled, semi-seen. As well, like its counterpart, it informs the manner of our subsequent looking – which again demands a careful looking through, a looking past; uncovering, unveiling, revealing.

These skeuomorphic friezes are impossible objects, plaster casts of carved originals, resurrected here in their third essence, simultaneously embodying original, copy and representation - the remade form of an abandoned corpus, and the enlivened twin of objects that will, in all likelihood, spend the rest of time out of sight and out of mind. Here, though, they occupy both sight and mind, existing as complex objects that ask us to celebrate the idea of the ruin as we remember the past, summoning an awareness of time as both macrocosmic and microcosmic experience, speaking of the sweeping loss of past histories, and the smaller, more private loss of the forgotten object. These works exist as sculptures that potently occupy our thoughts, although, like their foreshadowing originals, are perhaps all too soon to inhabit only our memories - glimpsed here, brie y, through the intervention of the artist in bringing the long and not so long past into our present, revealing the obscured and revitalising the usually dormant.

Meg Boulton

HYPOGEA, TEXT BY MARIE SALOMÉ PEYRONNEL

New York, May 11, 2016 – "What is essential is invisible to the eye," Antoine de Saint Exupery's famous utterance could be Radouan Zeghidour's motto. The 26-year-old Parisian artist's practice has been characterized by the building and documenting of illicit installations in hidden locations, the routes to which are disclosed only after the works are removed. Subway tunnels, catacombs and abandoned warehouses around Paris have served as his canvases – effectively denying access to any audience except the chosen few lucky enough to be a part of the process.

These underground structures, whether rafts, castle-like skeletons, or tombs are only revealed to a public audience after their life cycle, exhibited as recollections of the artist's secrets: photographs capturing the sites, video works of the journey underground, paintings made with the debris or detritus from his locations, and boxes of relics.

Oscillating between ideas of secrecy and the sacred, the Zeghidour's first New York solo exhibition presented at Catinca Tabacaru Gallery and curated by Marie Salomé Peyronnel, focuses on the memory of Désenchantement (i.e. Disenchantment), a structure made of wood, wax and wool built in Paris under the La Maison Rouge Museum in 2015. The name Hypogea, literally meaning underground, refers to the crypts, temples, and tombs that act as the artist's heterotopia; expanding his imagination, finding peace in the journey; and constructing new realms.
This exhibition includes six works: a box of relics made from polished aluminum and containing photographs and artifacts found on location while building Désenchantement; two debris paintings memorialized in wax; a video documenting the journey to the secret site; a hand drawn access map daring visitors to embark on a memorial pilgrimage to the original site of the installation; and a "tombstone" drawn with acid on aluminum marking the end of the process.

Marie Salomé Peyronnel

About Radouan Zeghidour:
Born in 1989, Radouan Zeghidour lives and works in Paris. He won the 2014 Thaddaeus Ropac Award and has been exhibited in Paris at the Fondation Brownstone, at Eglise Saint-Denys, and at Galerie Suzanne Tarasième. His work was also included in Marie Salomé Peyronnel's exhibition at the 2016 edition of SPRING/BREAK Art Show in New York City.

About Marie Salomé Peyronnel:
Marie Salomé is a French independent curator and writer based in Brooklyn. She discovered Radouan Zeghidour's work while researching a piece on "invisible art," later published in Vanity Fair (France, 2015). He politely declined the interview but has since become part of the roster of young foreigner artists Peyronnel brings with her to the United States.