

AU PIED DU GOUFFRE a solo show by Louis-Cyprien Rials

March 23th - April 27th 2019

With the collaboration of Clément Bedel and Romain Poirier

Curated by Aurélie Faure

For the third part of his trilogy, *Au pied du gouffre*, Louis Cyprien-Rials leads us into a spatio-temporal flow. After travelling the roads of East Africa and observing violence through windows, we end up in a desert of solitude. Alone, before these abiotic landscapes, time passes.

We tread on dry ground, made of salt and lava. The earth rumbles. On our way, we pass the signs and symbols of other times, whose provenance and meaning we ignore. Fascinated, we strive in vain to understand what they seem to be revealing to us. The subject is no longer about questioning, observing or bearing witness to something. We are faced with emptiness, nothingness, Time and beauty.

Au pied du gouffre is the last chapter of a trilogy. It links instants together, both here and there. It announces an elsewhere.

In a first space, three territories, three experiences or three periods are brought together: Italy millions of years ago, Japan, in 2007 and Kazakhstan, in 2016. They may be seen as paths through the furrows of memory.

The voyage starts with a long pigmentary print presenting the mineral portrait of a *Pietra Paesina*: a precious stone offering us visions of beauty and escape, the equivalent of an imaginary, lithic maze. We are then confronted with the black cloud of a volcanic eruption, frozen and abandoned. Its carbonaceous mist hovers over a riparian horizon. The water shivers and surprises us by its hue. Nothing else appears. And yet, the invisibility is dense. His X-Ray Records have materialized the phenomenon.

The X-Ray Records are medical x-rays on which music has been engraved. This technique goes back to the Soviet era when music meant resistance and had to be sold under the counter. The three prototypes of the *Polygon X-Ray* contain music composed and interpreted by Romain Poirier, an adaptation he realized for the x-ray records on the "Polygon" theme, composed for Louis-Cyprien Rials' eponymous video shot in 2016 in Kazakhstan. A score conceived as a gradation, a melancholic drone melody floating over lands scarred by more than 700 nuclear tests from between 1949 and 1990, in which bass notes crescendo in rhythm to dead time and silence and Larsen frequencies come together to plunge us into almost deafening, suffocating, overpowering violence. This voyage into limbo is inspired by radioactivity and the impact of radiated power during the explosion.

All three propositions are related to obsessions, and yet they form the directive lines of long-term projects : the genesis of the artist's fundamental projects. His passion for geo-politics is conveyed through testimonies in which extreme beauty is reflected, to the point of making us forget who the real protagonists actually are. This forgetfulness is the symptomatic denial of our humanity and reveals the end.

What, then, remains? There is a way of knowing the answer: by descending to the foot of the abyss.

Descending means falling, plummeting down. Collapsing. It also means changing levels. Maybe we should stop being afraid, of light as well of the dark, and break through, create new paths without touching the ground, totally immersed in order to be uplifted.

You may say that all of this is symbolic. Nevertheless, it is in this elsewhere that the deafening music invites you to lose yourself. Go down, then. The abyss is the depth created by collapse. The collapse of those who have lost faith. Faith we still have time to retrieve through the clues left by those who have lived before us.

Après la nuit is a video shot in several African regions: in Tanzania, Lake Natron, at the foot of the mountains sacred to the Massai people; in Uganda, by the Nyeru Rocks; in Somaliland, in the Laas Geel Caves; and in Ethiopia, in the Afar Triangle, or the Danakil Depression, at Erta Ale. The images move back and forth between hallucinated landscapes and rock paintings; between two volcanoes, one active and the other dormant; and between abysses and summits. These places are as hostile to life as their extreme splendour is difficult to reach.

Après la nuit is an ode to contemplation, a prelude to the second video, *Faith Rocks*, which aims towards elevation. *Faith Rocks* is a mounting of shots of the oldest and most mysterious Neolithic paintings, amongst which several have only recently been discovered (2002), dating back to 6000 years ago. Consisting in small human figures with open arms before large-sized animals, their origin and signification are unknown. A reminder, maybe? Just like the triptych by Clément Bedel, painted under the artist's guidance. This young painter, sensitive to the topics dear to Louis-Cyprien Rials, has accepted to apply his painting techniques to the desiderata of the photographer/video filmmaker. They interpret a fresco together displaying the empty hall of an American bank. There are no human figures, only what reminds us of our condition, the signs of which we no longer pay any attention to.

Our world is submitted to multiple forms of violence. Political, economic and climatic. Faced with a world running headlong towards its own destruction, Louis-Cyprien Rials has chosen to explore lands devastated by violence and doomed to disappear in order to offer their Beauty to our contemplation. He appeals to our humanity. We are nothing alone. Together, we will continue to exist.

Aurélie Faure

Translated in English by Emmelene Landon

LOUIS-CYPRIEN RIALS

Born in 1981, Louis-Cyprien Rials studied theater in France before discovering photography in Japan, where he lived for a few years. In 2007, he took a trip on the tracks of the painter Hiroshige to deliver a comparative analysis of Japanese landscape through time. Since his return from Japan in 2008, he lives between Paris, Bruxelles and Berlin, while continuing to travel in non-internationally recognized countries or in forbidden zones which he considers as « unvolontaries natural parcs ».

Besides his photographic researches, he works on the mineral and on the relation humans have with « imaged rocks », realising big photographic prints of landscapes made of rocks, that humans like to associate with other forms, leading to pareidolia phenomena.

The work on the landscape, its depth, and the interpretation we can have of its representations is an important part of the artist's work, whether it is in his projection's slides installations generating landscapes paintings, or in his video trilogy on the *Desert and violence*, finished in 2015 in Irak or the video *Polygon*, shot in 2016 in Kazakhstan. Louis-Cyprien Rials is the winner of the SAM Prize 2017 and shows his work in the Palais de Tokyo in 2019.

CLÉMENT BEDEL

Clément Bédél is a young French artist, born in 1993 in Strasbourg. He is graduated with the congratulations of the jury in 2017 from the École Nationale Supérieure d'Art et de Design de Nancy. Since two years, he lives and works in Belgrade in Serbia where he mostly practices painting.

Clément Bédél has been part of many collective exhibitions in Serbia and in France. He is preparing his first solo show *A Post-Consumerism Romance* which will take place in the cultural center of Belgrade in May 2019, and after that, a three months residence in the Spinnerei, in Leipzig, Germany, will follow.