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EXHIBITION

TOMORROW IN THE BATTLE THINK ON ME

OTIUM #2

DECEMBER 11TH 2015 - FEBRUARY 14TH 2016

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INSTITUT
D'ART CONTEMPORAIN
Villeurbanne/Rhône-Alpes

VANESSA BILLY, MAURICE BLAUSSYLD, KATINKA BOCK,
PETER BUGGENHOUT, JULIEN CRÉPIEUX, DARIO D'ARONCO
MARIA LOBODA, MEL O'CALLAGHAN, BRUNO PERSAT

Exhibition curator: Magalie Meunier

The IAC, which, since its creation, has placed research at the heart of its activities, presents itself periodically as the venue for Otium, an interim period in which art projects are shown; a time of reflection and meditation, distanced from everyday life, and a time to take a breather scheduled within the programme itself.

In June 2015, the IAC presented Otium #1, consisting of two parts: *De Mineralis, pierres de visions & Kata Tjuta*.

In December 2015, the IAC is presenting the collective project *Tomorrow in the Battle Think on Me*, bringing together French and international artists.

Tomorrow in the Battle Think on Me is constructed around a collage of ideas, artworks and emotions that echo the eponymous novel by Spanish writer Javier Marías (Rivages, 1996).

This exhibition is not so much based on the novel's plot as it is its mode of construction. The narrative framework follows a winding path, reflecting the acts of the character who, despite being the protagonist, remains peripheral to the action that he is both subjected to yet influences, as both observer and actor, witness and main character. Disrupting an action that is already a hesitant one, these verses reappropriated from Shakespeare's *Richard III* recur throughout the story:

*Tomorrow in the battle think on me, and fall thy edgeless sword!
Tomorrow in the battle think on me, when I was mortal, let fall thy lance.*

Let me sit heavy on thy soul tomorrow! Let me be lead within thy bosom, and weigh thee down to ruin, shame, and death.

Tomorrow in the battle think on me. Despair, and die!

These words come and go, becoming a ritornello, as though the narrator was endlessly attempting to recall the exact words or understand their implication. In his wanderings, punctuated by this litany, he becomes his own doppelgänger and tries to follow the action, like the ghost of his own story. Incantatory, aspiring to the sublime, this anaphora underpins the exhibition like a promise to be kept. It lends the book its lyrical title, which remains open to multiple interpretations and to a subjective appropriation.

It is about manifest power, energy and tenacity – an injunction to uphold things, to try and try again, sometimes to the point of absurdity.

The figure of Sisyphus appears in two videos by Mel O'Callaghan. In *Ever Tried, Ever Failed*, 2008, not presented here but one of the project's key references, we discover a solitary figure scaling the cliff of a mountain range, climbing up only to back fall down, tumbling head over heels. This faceless man here becomes, in some sense, the stone at the heart of the myth.

This same process is replayed in the installation *Ensemble, 2013*, in which the situation is reversed. In the first, the man becomes the natural element that hinders him, in the second, the man does not so much confront his peers as he does the water itself.

From the revisited myth stems the idea of an evolution through repetition, considered positively: the man goes further and further in quest of constant evolution supported by continually renewed hopes.

We find this movement in Vanessa Billy's sculptures, whose forms are multiplied within the space, evolving from one to the other, like the various freeze frames of a mutation.

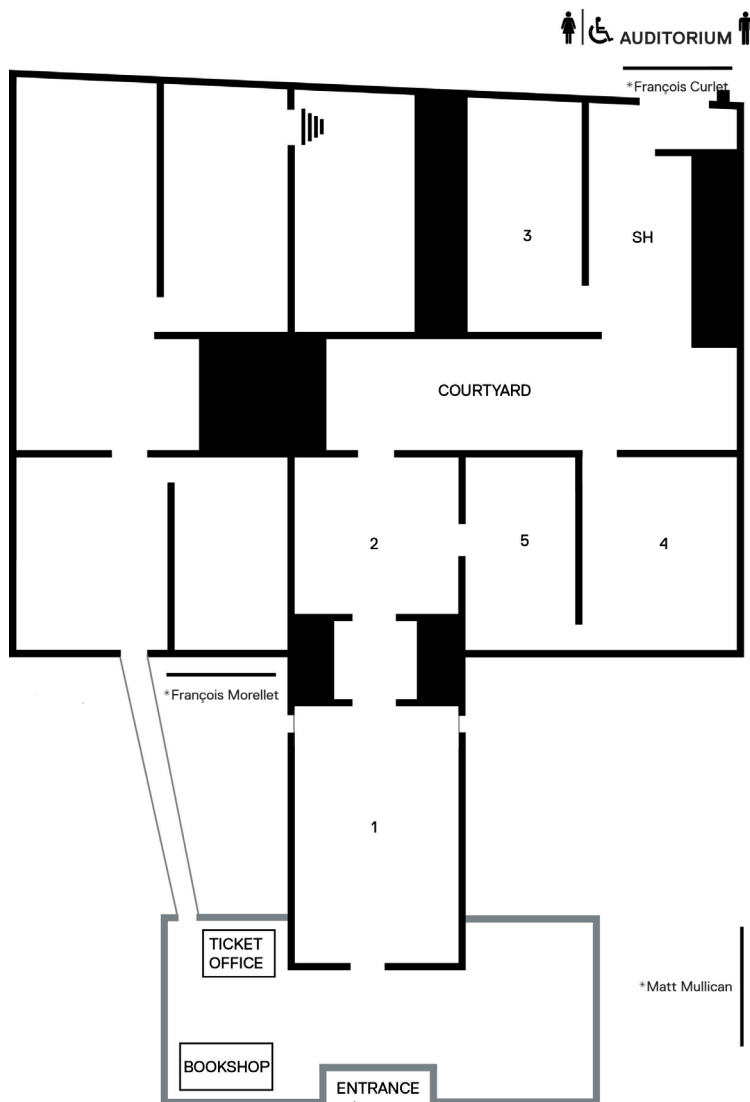
This repetition involves a tension, a vibrant energy, which develops as far as this point of equilibrium, never reaching its breaking point. The elements and materials that constitute the artworks are laden with meaning, ranging from the heaviest (Katinka Bock's stone) to the extremely light (Bruno Persat's helium balloon). Through assemblages, the artists reveal or imply their power. The compositions are sometimes compact, sometimes abstract.

Peter Buggenhout thus combines several elements derived from reality, recycled materials covered in organic matter that suddenly seem to maintain themselves in a loaded and precarious balance. Dario D'Aronco and Maurice Blaussyld, in a different way, assemble various elements that interact with each other in an almost abstract manner. These imbrications, similar to 3D collages, attract visitors while simultaneously appearing to elude them.

Finally, there is a moment of calm, a pause, in a nebulous landscape. Landscapes appear, both in the mural drawing made by Bruno Persat by kicking balls around and in Maria Loboda's formal gardens, with trees that become rocks. Between the two, there is a restful interlude that unites the oscillation of Julien Crépieux's hanging chairs, facing a landscape, and the floating of a balloon-bookshelf (Bruno Persat).

A tension emanates from the works presented in the exhibition, instilled with a kind of latent contained violence.

Exhibition rooms



ROOM 1 : Peter Buggenhout

ROOM 2 : Vanessa Billy

COURTYARD : Bruno Persat, Julien Crépieux,
Maria Loboda

SOUTH HALL : Dario D'Aronco

ROOM 3 : Mel O'Callaghan

ROOM 4 : Katinka Bock

ROOM 5 : Maurice Blaussyld

room 1

PETER BUGGENHOUT

Born in 1963 in Dendermonde (Belgium).

Lives and works in Ghent (Belgium).

Peter Buggenhout's installations and sculptures integrate a vast collection of materials (metal, plastic, fabric and construction waste) some of which are organic, with repugnant properties (domestic dust, animal blood and viscera, a horse's mane, etc.). The artist meshes and assembles these materials to produce a sculptural finish, marked by a phantasmagorical world, far removed from any form of concrete representation. Peter Buggenhout contributes to a form of archaeology of our contemporary world by collecting and inserting these various elements, that represent all manner of cast-offs. These items, losing their initial status, thus become akin to "artefacts" that are emblematic of our everyday life. The artist's sculptures are deployed in three series whose titles *Mont Ventoux*, *Gorgo* and *The Blind Leading The Blind* refer to art history, literature and the bible (among other references). These works echo the state of this world we live in that tends to perpetually elude us.

The Blind Leading the Blind #36, 2010

The Blind Leading the Blind #74, 2015

The Blind Leading the Blind #75, 2015

For *Tomorrow in the Battle Think on Me*, Peter Buggenhout presents three new sculptures from the series *The Blind Leading the Blind* initiated in 2000. The three sculptures are deployed autonomously in the first room of the IAC.

Appearing similar in their production from a formal point of view – a dark and amorphous mass, contrasting

with the white of the walls of the exhibition space – each sculpture is unique and differentiates itself from the others, particularly through its dimensions and modes of presentation. Whether arranged on the wall, under a display case or placed on a pedestal, the relationship with visitors differs in each case (proximity, distanciation, observation as a strange object of curiosity).

Closer up, the layering of the various materials covered in dust allows details to be glimpsed. More easily apprehended, they thus stand out against the background. The tangled state of the various elements presents a complex network of lines. The impression of chaos, of something destroyed and devastated, is soon thwarted in favour of a notion of rigorous construction, in which each element has in fact been meticulously arranged. Like archaeological remains, ruins that are continually embrittled, Peter Buggenhout's sculptures generate attraction and repulsion and thus recreate the conditions of the sublime, a mirror of the complex world around us.

This is reinforced by the title of the series to which the three works presented belong, *The Blind Leading the Blind*, echoing *The Parable of the Blind*¹ and Bruegel's eponymous canvas: "Just like the blind men in the painting, no one is aware of their past or where they belong, and no one knows exactly what the future holds for them," says Peter Buggenhout.

1. "If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit." (Matthew 15:4)

room 2

VANESSA BILLY

Born in 1978 in Geneva
(Switzerland).

Lives and works in Zurich
(Switzerland).

Vanessa Billy's sculptures are often derived from improbable encounters between objects taken from real life. Her practice focuses on exploring the potentiality of these objects – bearers of their former uses – revealing them by transforming or associating them.

She plays with the properties of the materials – stone, metal, plastic, marble, pottery, fabric, or found objects – and their specific material particularities (weight, gravity, evaporation, etc.).

Through the practice of displacement and association, as well as through the choice of words for the titles of her works, the artist provokes the appearance of new forms, obliging us to reconsider our relationship to our environment and our everyday life.

***Starting Where the Previous Day
Ended, 2011***

Throughout the Day, 2011

At the Day of the End, 2011

The space dedicated to Billy's sculptures contrasts with the works of Peter Buggenhout, while also offering similarities with them. Three sculptures assume several variations, which emerge as a logical evolution of these forms. These consist of the presence of simple objects (rope, bucket, stone, rag, dish etc.) arranged around identical metal structures. The bucket and the stone are associated in a relationship of equilibrium and

imbrication, the fabric and pottery exist at first separately, but meet a bit further on.

Their arrangement in the space and their presence, which seems to evolve from one structure to the other, introduce the possibility of an unfolding over time or even a narration. The titles of the artworks recall time passing, which could also refer to the time of memory.

By walking through this installation, the visitor is invited to roam around this space-time, to reconstitute the thread of the story, to fill in the missing spaces with the feeble clues that the assemblage of the objects constitutes, reminiscent of both a familiar environment and a poetic and abstract one.

courtyard

The courtyard is offered as a parenthesis, a space suitable for a contemplative pause. The visitor is invited to sit in Julien Crépieux's hanging chairs, facing the landscapes formed by Maria Loboda's and Bruno Persat's works.

BRUNO PERSAT

Born in 1975 in Cagnes-sur-Mer (France).

Lives and works in Paris, France.

The point of departure for Bruno Persat's installations is his curiosity for modes of transmission of knowledge and experience (archives, documents, manuals, etc.). His works are often left open to exterior participation, by visitors, for instance, and may include objects, drawings or photographs. For *Tomorrow in the Battle Think on Me*, two of the artists' works are presented.

***Trying to Make a Work of Art Thinking of Babylon...*, 2011**

A mural drawing on a large scale, *Trying to Make a Work of Art Thinking of Babylon* occupies one whole wall of the courtyard. Ephemeral and random in nature, adapted to the dimensions of the exhibition space, the work was made through a unique artistic process. What appears from a distance to be an abstract landscape is in fact the traces of impact of a ball on a wall covered in charcoal. Through this collectively produced action, Bruno Persat temporarily transformed the exhibition space into a playground. The marks from the football are both the imprints of this action and the evocation for the artist of a "truncated" icosahedron, a geometric shape in reference to Platonic solids.

It is also a question for Bruno Persat of revisiting the recent history of mural drawing – more often associated with conceptual artists such as Sol LeWitt – while introducing a sensitive dimension.

The title of the work is an allusion to Richard Brautigan's novel *Dreaming of Babylon* (1977) in which the protagonist escapes to Babylon through dreams, a place where he invents himself an imaginary world.

Les Pôles (bibliothèque n°2) [The Poles (bookshelf n°2)], 2015

An aerial and mobile bookshelf, *Les Pôles* is an installation that moves around the courtyard of the IAC. The balloon of the "meteorological" variety, filled with helium, becomes the support for an ephemeral bookshelf for the duration of the exhibition. On a wooden plank several books chosen by the artist from his personal collection are laid out. Deliberately covered, we cannot see the titles or the authors of these books, which constitute a "contextual" bibliography based on the theme of poles, sites of utopia, and scientific expeditions – also symbolised by the presence of the balloon.

Like a library, the visitors can consult the books on site. When one or more books are displaced, the balloon's trajectory is modified and starts to rise to the ceiling of the exhibition space.

MARIA LOBODA

Born in 1979 in Krakow (Poland).

Lives and works in London (United Kingdom).

A fan of illusions and superstitions, mystical symbols and coded messages, Maria Loboda has a penchant for the stories hidden behind things.

In her assemblages of found and transformed elements, she

rearranges these symbols and produces her artworks like puzzles to be solved.

Between rationality and magic, the artist brings materials and references into contact that seemingly should never have met. The elegance, the peaceful appearance of carefully selected and subtly transformed materials harbours a disquieting core: the artwork *Ah, Wilderness* consists of boughs from three different trees, arranged in a somewhat baroque way – cedar, pine and birch. Yet if they were found together in nature, these three species would destroy one another in a cruel Darwinian struggle.

Nothing is what it seems. Loboda's works are charged with a unique and highly psychological effect of «trompe l'œil».

Formal Garden in the Early Morning Hours (1, 2, 3, 5), 2013

A series of four digital collages present in similar landscapes, a path surrounded by trimmed bushes – images of a natural world mastered by humans but where the plants look more like dark stones, erected like steles.

What we imagine to be the sky, composed of streaks of mixed paints, does not resemble any known sky, causing a slow shift into a fictional landscape, akin to pre-apocalyptic visions.

A disturbing landscape, whether for its over-arrangement of nature, the path that leads nowhere or the overloaded background, we are in a place of dreams, resembling a known space while representing an otherworldly danger.

This impression that is essential to the principle of the uncanny introduced by Freud, is heightened by the sense of something superior,

coming from the sky, which dominates us and causes us to reflect on our own condition. Loboda's works suggest that all attempts of control are illusory.

JULIEN CRÉPIEUX

**Born in 1979 in Saint-Lô (France).
Lives and works in Paris (France).**

Julien Crépieux's works are based on a keen observation of the images present in our daily life (television, internet, etc.).

By analysing their nature, their movement and the way in which they can be associated, the artist explores and reuses them in his installations, videos, sculptures and photographic collages.

Through reappropriation, he confers a new narrative and poetic dimension to them.

Untitled, 2011

Julien Crépieux presents *Untitled*, three wooden chairs hanging from the ceiling on ropes. These were created for the exhibition *Le Sentiment des choses [The Feeling of Things]* in 2011 at the Plateau Frac Île-de-France. On this occasion, the furniture had been especially designed for the people working in the exhibition spaces and their habits, and was therefore meant for the mediators.

Here, *Untitled* offers a real pause in the exhibition circuit, with the swaying movement encouraging a moment of tranquillity and contemplation.

These seats enable new points of view over the spaces and the neighbouring works. They also share the aerial and mobile character of Bruno Persat's works.

south hall

DARIO D'ARONCO

**Born in 1980 in Latina (Italy).
Lives and works in Rotterdam
(The Netherlands) and Rome
(Italy).**

The connection between sound and visual art is a central element in Dario D'Aronco's work.

In recent years, he has been interested in the work of Italian composer Giacinto Scelsi (1905 – 1988), particularly in terms of the aspects of his work that D'Aronco was able to transcribe through physical elements. How can the immaterial be presented? How can we capture that which by definition escapes us? These are the kinds of questions found throughout D'Aronco's work.

Surface for 5 Female Voices, 2014

The title of the work sheds light on the space and the various enigmatic elements we are confronted with: on the floor, a strip of carpet cut into an L-shape that we can see is coated with some kind of material (acrylic paint), further on there is another piece of carpet, this time rolled up, which could be the missing part of the one on the floor. A blank canvas mounted on a frame, with identical dimensions, thus plays the same role. There is also a continuous sound playing in the space that seems to be the same note sung by one or several female voices.

Dario D'Aronco, inspired by the work of composer Giacinto Scelsi (whose emblematic works are characterised by his focus on sound, and often monody), records the voices of five women singing the same note, based on a performance that took place in

the exhibition space. Their voices seem to now permeate and colour the space, particularly the strip of carpet that plays the role of an imprint for this elusive material that is sound, with the paint 'absorbing' the singing. The overall work forms a coherent whole for the artist, bringing together the material and immaterial dimensions in this installation, following a logic of imbrication and presenting a subtle relationship to the exhibition space. The elements of D'Aronco's work make use of the tension between showing what is hidden, or vice versa. Concealing is often a way of emphasising what has been removed from view: it is the missing elements that interest us and make us wonder. Where do these voices come from? Where are the bodies that are emitting them? Where is the painting that should be on the canvas? Where is the missing part of the carpet?

room 3

MEL O'CALLAGHAN

**Born in 1975 in Sydney (Australia).
Lives and works in Paris (France).**

Mel O'Callaghan works on a variety of media, ranging from video to sculpture and photography. Representations of nature and landscape return recurrently in his works and prove to be at once elements of decor and protagonists in the artist's videos.

With an economy of means, and in favour of a poetic narrative, the artist highlights the mechanisms of our contemporary world.

Ensemble, 2013

In the video *Ensemble*, the large format of the image, separated into two screens, offers a captivating tableau for the visitor, filmed in nature.

Three men in uniforms and helmets resembling fire fighters enter the field from the left of the image and activate a fire hose.

We watch them buckle under the elemental force of the water. After a while, a fourth individual appears on the right-hand side of the screen and boldly advances. He embarks on an improbable march, defying and confronting the extreme power of the jet.

Through an alternation of wide shots and tighter shots, we are invited to follow this man's determined progression. He gradually gains some ground, crossing the limit separating the first screen from the second.

Consequently, the three men start to move backwards in retreat. It is at this threshold that the action reaches its climax. Mel O'Callaghan presents us with an act of resistance : the

man finds himself on the ground, struggling and crawling. The human beings positioned on either side of the image, truly pushed to their physical limits, do not give up and claim a victory over the power of the jet. The action depicted by the artist requires resolution and resistance, both on the part of the protagonist and the visitor confronted by the work.

room 4

KATINKA BOCK

**Born in 1976 in Frankfurt
(Germany).**

**Lives and works in Paris and Berlin
(Germany).**

For Katinka Bock, the physical qualities of the materials and the specificities of the places where she intervenes play an essential role. The habitual uses of the spaces and the human experiences attached to them find transpositions in simple materials such as clay, sand, stone, chalk or metal. Based on these materials, the artist provides a form for a temporality or process, working from imprints, or simple phenomena such as evaporation, saturation or desiccation. Many of her works are thus animated by discreet changes, which operate for the duration of the exhibition, revealing the attention paid to natural processes and to the ways of presenting these.

***Balance, 2009* ***

Based on two identical clay volumes, Katinka Bock shapes two vases, giving an open form to one and a narrow form to the other. Connected by pulleys, these two recipients are filled with the same quantity of water and placed in perfect equilibrium at the start of the exhibition. Over a number of days, the water evaporates more quickly from the tapered pot, gradually modifying the initial balance. *Balance* expresses a measure of time founded on a simple phenomenon and on the physical properties of forms and materials. Concerning the initial production of this work, the artist explains: "I had imagined that in the course of the exhibition, the vase would be

lowered onto the table, but I didn't know if that would happen, or if it would fall or break. So it was like a story."

***Stein unter der Tisch (blau), 2009* *** **[*Stone under the table (blue)*]**

Stein unter der Tisch, consists of a table, under which an imposing stone has been set. Despite its robust nature, the stone appears to have been subjected to the scale of the wooden table, with one of its legs literally built into the rock. By comparing the familiar object and the raw element derived from nature, the artist convokes opposing realities into a conversation, and explores the tensions between them. The power of the sculpture resides in the confrontation between an object fashioned to suit the scale of the human body, and the rock, which operates as a fragment of immensity.

* Works from the IAC collection,
Villeurbanne / Rhône-Alpes

room 5

MAURICE BLAUSSYLD
Born in 1960 in Calais (France).
Lives and works in Roubaix
(France).

Maurice Blaussyld's approach is based on neutrality, ambiguity and detachment. Any idea of representation is evacuated in this work, which is intended as impenetrable. Yet, thanks to these four works, like a still life, the visitor is invited to follow the process of an artist in search of a cosmic and spiritual unity. All of Maurice Blaussyld's work refers to questioning the meaning of life. His works do not provide forms in the traditional sense of the term; they are articulated – beyond an impression of absence or void – based on a discrepancy between the real and the immaterial, based on existential doubt.

Granit, 1998

A quadrangular stone basin, with one concave side and one flat side, *Granite* has three holes drilled into it, originally designed for water circulation. A plug made out of newspaper obstructs one of them, once again signalling congested communication. *Granite* has been placed on its side at a vertical 90° angle, and despite certain similarities with Duchamp's *Fountain* (the tilted position and the sanitary use of both items) the work derogates from the principle of the ready-made.

Sans titre, autoportrait [Untitled, self-portrait], 1994

A monitor that is switched off in the exhibition room, intriguing the visitor, seems to call for activation. There is nothing else to contemplate

besides the artist's portrait. The framing of the face elides the mouth and, with it, language. Only Blaussyld's gaze, fixed on the off-camera field, persists. This portrait constitutes an enactment of the "artist's mystique", between those that talk and those that stay silent: the work resides in the appearance of the face on the screen just as much as in its disappearance. Between appearance and concealment, the artist provides access, in a laconic way, to the repetition of the mystery of the unfathomable: a face seen intermittently, with elusive speech. For Maurice Blaussyld, it is a matter of exposing his own existential vulnerability and his inability to be the kind of artist that freely expounds "messages".

Untitled, 1991

5 newspaper articles framed under glass, keeping visitors at bay. This makes it difficult if not impossible to read these articles: this is not a staging of current events, of what might constitute an event or History. Nowhere in Blaussyld's work is there a question of temporal inscription, a principle that reflects the special status of the artwork for this artist. The vast majority of Blaussyld's works are untitled and without specific dates, thus evading the usual anecdotes regarding their development. They are entirely dedicated to the sole question of appearance. And while certain objects were not simply found but "encountered", "given", or "revealed", most of them have been dictated. The artist thus challenges the possibility of a creative act, considering that artworks reside in an "eternal pre-existence". The artworks, which are neither from the past nor recent, thus testify to an eternal

present or inner time.

Untitled, 1991

These texts by the artist are dense because the punctuation has been entirely removed from them. Capital letters, commas, points and dashes disappear from the typed pages. Free of written pauses and oral breathing indications, the lines unfold like mental litanies, flowing like a perpetual rumination.

The tone ranges from poetic to theological. Uninterrupted, this language is posited as “pure speech”. A secular verb comparable to music as it is described by John Cage as “[...] a constant activity [that] can be produced without the predominance of will. Without syntax or structure, but analogous with the sum total of nature, it will arise for no reason.”

While it is possible to consult these writings, it is more difficult to understand them, since they are littered with opaque concepts from which nonetheless emerge recurrent dualities that balance the overall work: affirmation and negation, appearance and Being, exteriority and interiority, duality and unity, body and soul, finite and infinite, pain and joy.

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PRACTICAL INFORMATION

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Exhibition from December 11th 2015 to February 14th 2016

OPENINGS HOURS

From Wednesday to Friday from 2 pm to 6 pm

Weekends from 1 pm to 7 pm

Free guided visits

On Saturday and Sunday at 4 pm and on weekdays by appointment

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Sunday 10 January at 3:30 pm: Family Sunday: family visit followed by a nice afternoon snack!

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L'institut d'art contemporain is assisted by the Ministère de la culture et de la communication (DRAC Rhône-Alpes), the Conseil régional Rhône-Alpes and the Ville de Villeurbanne.

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