



Artavazd

Three films by
a legendary filmmaker

Pelechian

Nature

EXHIBITION
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Fondation *Cartier*
pour l'art contemporain

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Artavazd Pelechian

Nature

"I am convinced that cinema can convey certain things that no language in the world can translate. For me, it goes back to the Tower of Babel, to before the division into different languages." Artavazd Pelechian

The first exhibition devoted to Artavazd Pelechian in France, *Nature* presents an unprecedented dialogue between three of the filmmaker's major works: *Nature*, his first film in twenty-seven years, and *Land of the People*, one of his first films made in 1966, and *The Seasons*, an ode to peasant life completed in 1975. Commissioned in 2005 by the Fondation Cartier and ZKM Filminstitut¹ (Karlsruhe, Germany), *Nature* is the culmination of fifteen years of work by a director whose filmography is as sparse as it is celebrated. The exhibition shines a light on this major figure of the seventh art and his lyrical, at times prophetic, body of work.

Alongside the screening of this film-event, the Fondation Cartier is offering the chance to rediscover two gems of Pelechian's filmography. *The Seasons* depicts a community of Armenian peasants, revealing the symbiotic bond connecting them to the natural environment in which they live and work. Artavazd Pelechian's musical approach to film editing reaches new heights of intensity with this film.

Land of the People, considered as a portentous film, looks to the human drive for technological progress—as illustrated in the 1960s by a great capital like Moscow, with its technical and architectural feats—observed by the filmmaker in the manner of Rodin's *Thinker*, which features in the opening and closing shots. But this celebration of the promises of progress heralds the next phase of Pelechian's filmography, in which he would go on to develop a more pessimistic vision of this technological race. Brought together, these three essential films engage in a dialogue that deeply resonates with the challenges of our time, from opposite ends of the filmmaker's body of work.

Born in Armenia, Artavazd Pelechian created most of his work in Moscow between 1964 and 1993. Over the course of nearly thirty years, in the heart of the Soviet system, he made nine uniquely crafted short and medium-length films, almost exclusively in black and white, composed of documentary images. These images, taken from archives and actual footage shot by the filmmaker, were reworked (slowed, reframed, inverted) and edited together to produce veritable visual poems that escape the classical distinction between fiction and documentary. Drawing on universal themes such as birth, exile, and the lives of animals, each of its films attests to his belief in a language unique to cinema. His style, devoid of any narration, subtly places image and sound on equal footing. As he explained to Jean-Luc Godard in 1992: "I am striving for a montage that can create an emotional magnetic field around it."²

A cinema of emotion, without dialogue, actors, or storylines, his work transports audiences with its spellbinding lyricism, taking an incisive yet empathetic look at the human condition.

Discovered with astonishment in the West in the early 1980s, first by film critic Serge Daney, then by Godard, subsequently found his place among the great figures of international cinema.

While it was long thought that his filmography had concluded with the film *Life* in 1993, Pelechian has now returned with a new film, simply titled *Nature*, through which he once again observes the delicate cohabitation of human communities with their environment. Gathered from the Internet, most of the images that compose the film are fragile, amateur-shot traces from within nature and its tremors that regularly rock these communities. Volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and tsunamis form the film's visual fabric, and are set against images of grandiose natural landscapes. A visual elegy, the film resolutely acknowledges the superiority of nature, with its unrelenting force, capable of transcending all human ambition. With this, the filmmaker seems to remind us that humankind will not emerge victorious from the ecological havoc that it has created.

In dialogue with this film-event, the Fondation Cartier is offering the chance to rediscover one of the wonders of Artavazd Pelechian's filmography: *The Seasons* from 1975. It depicts a community of Armenian peasants, revealing their humble relationship with the natural environment in which they live and work. As the seasons pass, these farmers and shepherds are seen caring for their fields and flocks, literally becoming one with the landscape. With this film, Pelechian's musical approach to film editing reaches new heights of intensity. The symbiotic connection uniting these peasants and their environment provides a striking contrast to the end-of-days visions of *Nature*.

Brought together, these three major works engage in dialogue that deeply resonates with the challenges of our time. Complemented with a gallery devoted to the filmmaker's life and work, featuring images and archival documents, the exhibition showcases this important filmmaker, whose filmography holds a distinctive position in the history of cinema.

Nature (2020) is a coproduction of the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain in Paris and the ZKM in Karlsruhe, with support from the Folks Arts Hub Foundation in Yerevan.

Curators: Hervé Chandès and Thomas Delamarre, assisted by Sidney Gérard.

1. Zentrum für Kunst und Medien/Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe, Germany.
2. "Un langage d'avant Babel," a conversation between Artavazd Pelechian and Jean-Luc Godard, interview conducted by Jean-Michel Frodon, *Le Monde*, April 2, 1992.

Exhibition information, Nomadic Nights,
Nights of Uncertainty,
and the Children's Workshop program
on fondationcartier.com

Biography

1938

Artavazd Pelechian is born in Armenia in Leninakan, present-day Gyumri. He is raised in Kirovakan (now Vanadzor), where, after technical training, he was first a metal worker, and later a draftsman.

1963

Having settled in Moscow, Pelechian decides to enter the VGIK, the prestigious film school, which counts among its former students major figures of Soviet cinema, including Andrei Tarkovsky, Sergei Parajanov, Alexander Sokurov, and Andrei Konchalovsky. He makes his first three films here and graduates in 1968.

1964

Mountain Patrol

La Patrouille de la montagne

Film 35 mm, black-and-white, 10 min., Armenia/USSR

This film follows a group of workers who each day clear the tracks for trains in the Armenian mountains. Artavazd Pelechian extols the dignity and rigor of manual labor.

1966

Land of the People

La Terre des hommes

Film 70 mm, black-and-white, 10 min., USSR

Land of the People opens and closes with an image of Auguste Rodin's sculpture *The Thinker*. Between these two sequences, the film evokes the accomplishments and activities through which humans inhabit the Earth.

1967

The Beginning

Au Début

Film 35 mm, black-and-white, 10 min., USSR

Made on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution (1917), this film shows images of the Russian Revolution in parallel with sequences invoking the worldwide social strife of the 1960s.

1969

We | Nous

Film 35 mm, black-and-white, 26 min., Armenia/USSR

A vibrant tribute to the Armenian people, *We* visually expresses exile, reunion, collective fervor, destruction, and reconstruction, capturing the tumults of Armenia's history. With this film, Artavazd Pelechian starts exploring distance montage.

1970

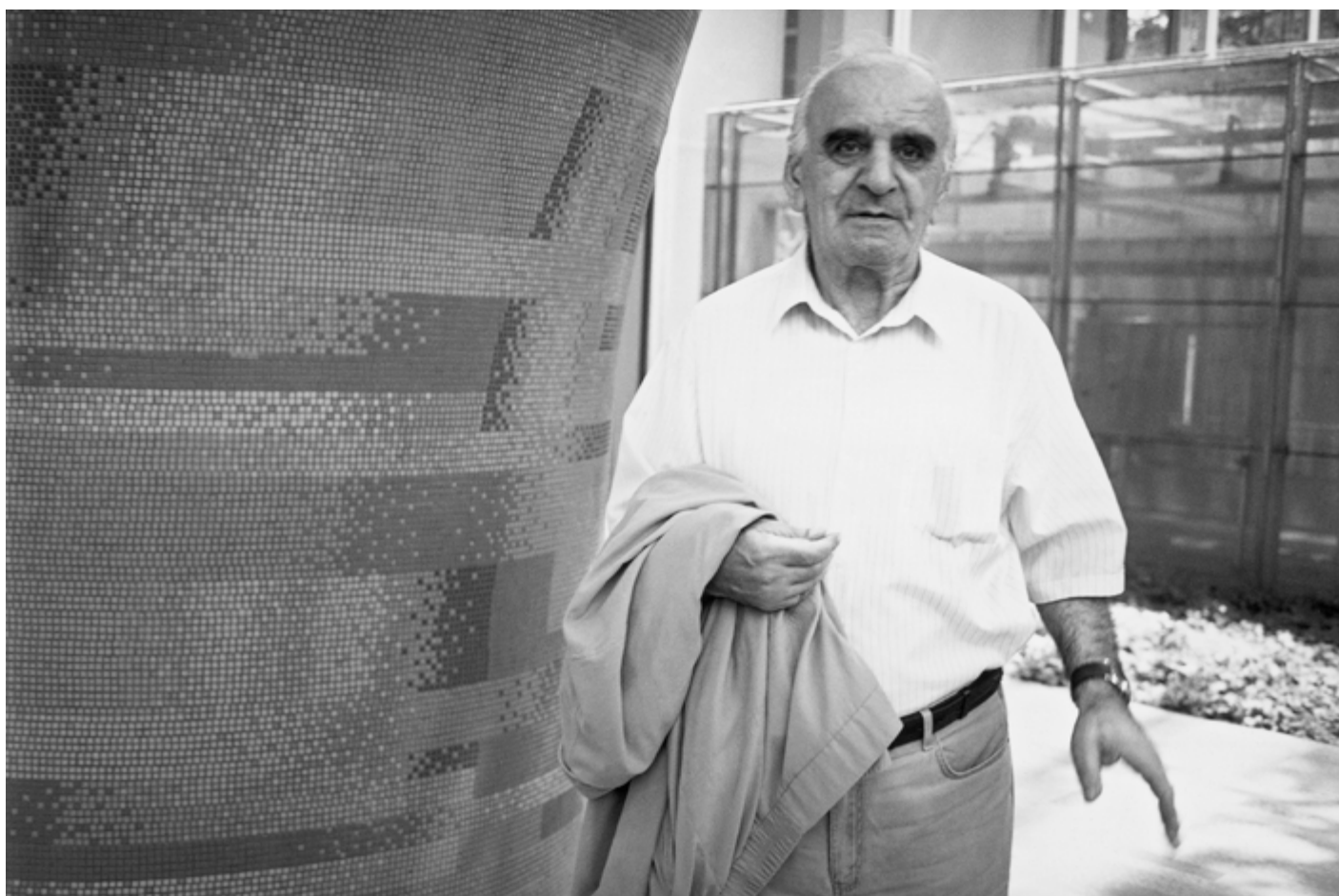
The Inhabitants

Les Habitants

Film 35 mm, black-and-white, 10 min., Belarus/USSR

In this pioneering film, hordes of wild animals, some of the planet's other inhabitants, flee an invisible threat, which audiences gradually associates with humanity's influence over the planet.

First screening of one of Artavazd Pelechian's films in the West: *We* is shown at the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen in Germany, where the jury awards it first prize.



1975

The Seasons

Les Saisons

Film 35 mm, black-and-white, 29 min 59 s,
Armenia/USSR

With its epic sweep, *The Seasons* follows a community of Armenian peasants in their daily labor, tuning their relationship with nature to the rhythm of the seasons.

1982

Our Century

Notre Siècle

Film 35 mm, black-and-white, 48 min. (1982) /
30 min. (1990), Armenia/USSR

Our Century evokes the race to the stars embarked upon by the United States and the USSR in the 20th century, turning the utopia of Icarus's dream into a frenetic technological race.

1983

Film critic Serge Daney meets Artavazd Pelechian in Moscow. In *Libération*, he publishes one of the first profiles of the filmmaker in the Western press, which marks the beginning of his international recognition.

"I suddenly have the (pleasant) feeling of coming face to face with a missing link in the true history of cinema." Serge Daney, *Libération*, August, 11 1983

1988

Russian publication of *Moyo Kino* [My cinema], a manifesto in which the filmmaker develops his cinematic theories, in particular his conception of distance montage (also called contrapuntal editing). Invited by the International Film Festival Rotterdam, Artavazd Pelechian makes his first trip to the West. The following year, Jean-Luc Godard is struck by the discovery of his films at the Nyon International Documentary Film Festival in Switzerland, shown as part of a retrospective of Armenian cinema.

1992

The End | Fin

Film 35 mm, black-and-white, 8 min., Armenia

During a train trip from Moscow to Yerevan, Artavazd Pelechian films the passengers, men and women of different ages and origins. This collective journey, steadily unspooling against an uncertain horizon, can be seen as a metaphor for life, a certain notion of destiny.

The first retrospective of Artavazd Pelechian's films is held in the West, at the Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume in Paris. On this occasion, an exceptional conversation between Artavazd Pelechian and Jean-Luc Godard is published in *Le Monde*, the result of a meeting in Paris organized by Jean-Michel Frodon.

Artavazd Pelechian's theoretical text, *Contrapuntal montage, or the Theory of Distance*, taken from his book *Moyo Kino*, is published in French in the second issue of the journal *Trafic*, founded by Serge Daney.

1993

Life | Vie

Film 35 mm, color, 7 min., Armenia/USSR

Life celebrates the moment of birth through images of women in labor and of newborns. A veritable ode to existence, the film references religious iconography to invoke the mystery of childbirth.

2001

The Fondation Cartier presents the film *The Seasons* during the exhibition *Un Art Populaire*. This is the beginning of a long-standing relationship with the filmmaker, with exhibitions held in Paris (in particular, *Ce Qui Arrive*, conceived by philosopher Paul Virilio, 2002) and abroad. Four of Artavazd Pelechian's films have since joined the Fondation Cartier's collection: *The Seasons*, *The Inhabitants*, *Our Century*, and *Nature*. In 2014, the film *The Inhabitants* became the central piece in a series of exhibitions organized by Argentinian artist Guillermo Kuitca from the Fondation Cartier's collection, held in Paris (2014), Buenos Aires (2017), and Milan (2021).

2005

The Fondation Cartier and the ZKM Filminstitut commission a new film from Artavazd Pelechian. The director drafts a synopsis, the original of which is displayed in this room, precisely describing the visual construction of the film, titled *Nature*.

2014

On the occasion of the Fondation Cartier's thirtieth anniversary, artist and musician Patti Smith conceives a concert titled *Swans, A Tribute to Artavazd Pelechian*, held in the filmmaker's presence

2015

Publication of Russian and English versions of *My Universe and Unified Field Theory*. Here, Artavazd Pelechian develops his thinking on notions of space and time in relation to his conceptions of cinema, echoing what he had written decades earlier in his text, *Le Montage à Contrepoint*.

2020

Nature

La Nature

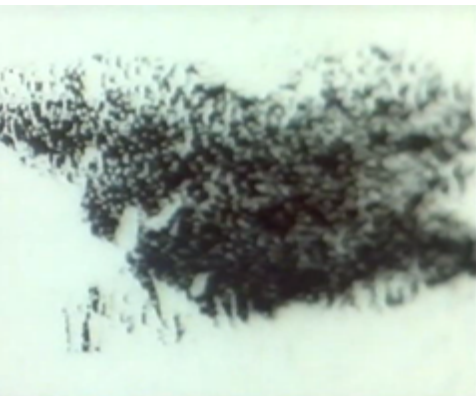
Digital, black-and-white, 62 min., France/
Armenia/Germany

Artavazd Pelechian's new film depicts the force and majesty of nature, capable of overpowering human communities and their achievements. *Nature* offers a striking vision of the likely conclusion of the ecological havoc that currently reigns.

Filmography

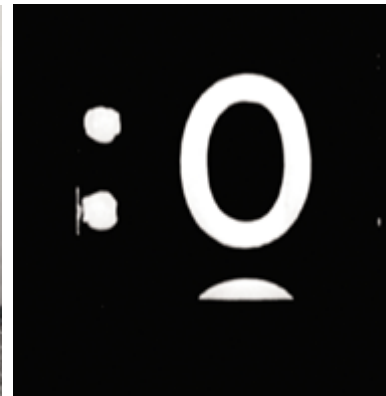


| 1964 Mountain Patrol | *La Patrouille de la montagne*
→ 35mm black-and-white film, 10 min, Armenia.

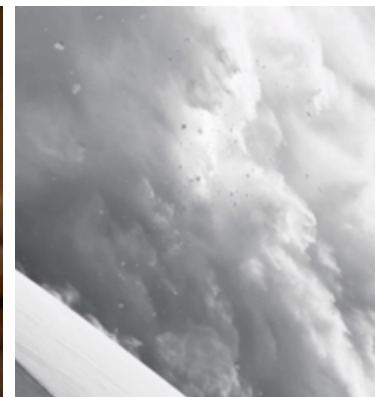


| 1967 The Beginning | *Au Début*
→ 35mm black-and-white film, 10 min, URSS.

| 1969 We | *Nous*
→ 35mm black-and-white film, 26 min, Armenia, URSS.



| 1975 The Seasons | *Les Saisons*
→ 35mm black-and-white film, 29 min, URSS.



| 1993 Life | *Vie*
→ 35mm color film, 7 min, Armenia, URSS.



| 1966 Land of the People | *La Terre des hommes*
→ 70mm black-and-white film, 10 min, URSS.



| 1970 The Inhabitants | *Les Habitants*
→ 35mm black-and-white film, 10 min, Belarus, URSS.



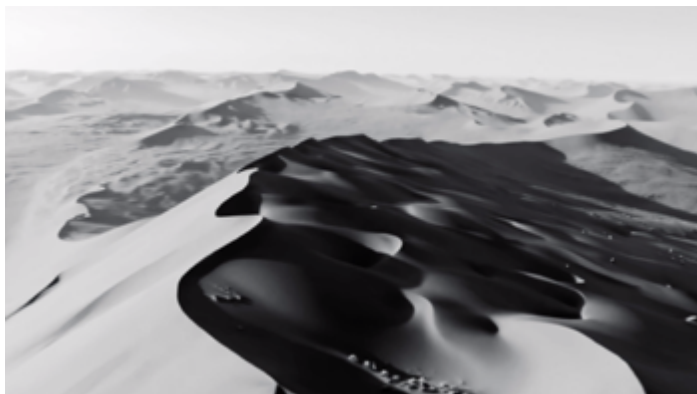
| 1982 Our Century | *Notre Siècle*
→ 35mm black-and-white film, 48 min. (1982) / 30 min. (1990), Armenia, URSS.

| 1992 The End | *Fin*
→ Shot in Armenia, 35mm black-and-white film, 8 min, Armenia.



| 2020 Nature | *La Nature*
→ Digital black-and-white, 1h 2 min, France, Germany, Armenia.

Press Visuals



↑ 1



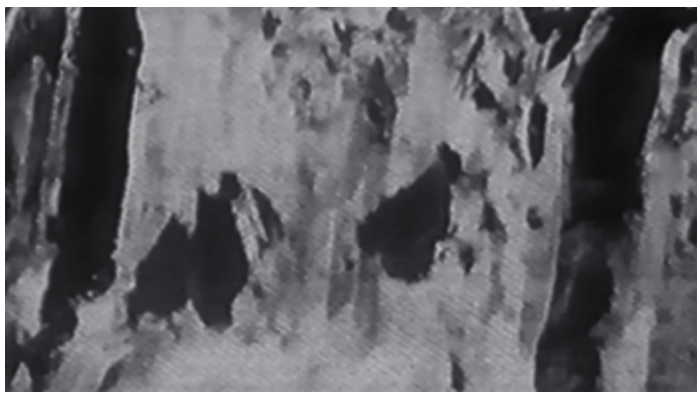
↑ 2



↑ 3



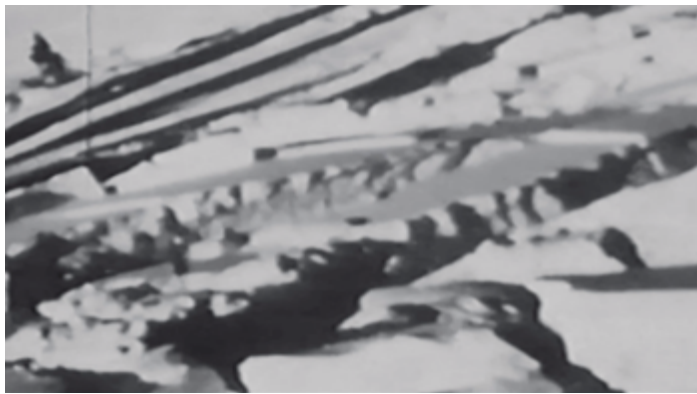
↑ 4



↑ 5



↑ 6



↑ 7



↑ 8

1 to 8 → Artavazd Pelechian, *Nature*, stills from the film, 2020
© Artavazd Pelechian. DR.

9 to 14 → Artavazd Pelechian, *The Seasons*, stills from the film, 1975
© Artavazd Pelechian. DR.

15 → Raymond Depardon, Artavazd Pelechian, 2006 © Raymond Depardon.



↑ 9



↑ 10



↑ 11

↓ 13



↑ 12

↓ 15



↓ 14



"Before Babel"

Conversation between **Artavazd Pelechian** and **Jean-Luc Godard**, interview conducted by Jean-Michel Frodon, *Le Monde*, April 2, 1992.

"On the periphery of the official and commercial circuits, a network based on the complicity and admiration has led to Pelechian's film being discovered, little by little, in the West. Jean-Luc Godard was one of the first and still one of the most enthusiastic defenders of his work, The Armenian's journey to Paris provided an opportunity to suggest that they meet. They talked about art and science, morality and politics, show business and information. In short, they talked about the film.
Jean-Michel Frodon

Jean-Luc Godard: What conditions have you worked under?

Artavazd Pelechian: I've made all my films in Armenia, but often with help from Moscow. I don't want to praise the old system, but I wouldn't complain about it either. At least they had the VGIK (Cinematic Institute), which provided excellent training. We learned about cinema not just in the Soviet Union but all over the world and everyone then had an opportunity to find his or her own voice. I don't want to make the system responsible for the fact that I have made so few films; let's just say that I had some personal problems. I still don't know what is going to happen in the new situation. I hope I will be able to go on working; there are always problems, as there are in France as well, problems relating to production and to the relationships between people. Until now, the biggest problem has been the poor distribution of my films.

JLG: I discovered them because they were shown at the festival of documentary films at Nyon, a few kilometres from where I live. Freddy Buache, the director of the Cinémathèque de Lausanne, applied the "Soviet method" to them for making copies: he made a copy of them during the night and showed it to us—to Anne-Marie Mieville and me. They made an enormous impression on me, but quite different to the films of Paradjanov, who seems to me close to the tradition of Persian carpet making and to literature. Your films, it seemed to me, could only come out of cinematic traditions.

As if the work of Eisenstein, Dovzhenko and Vertov had managed to go on and make an impression something like certain films of Flaherty or certain documentaries of the Cuban film-maker Santiago Alvarez. A type of film both traditional and original, completely outside America, which is very strong in world cinema. Even *Rome, an open city*, owes something to America. When there is an occupation, the problem of resistance comes up and how to resist. When I saw your films I had the impression that, whatever defects the so-called socialist system may have, at one time certain powerful personalities succeeded in thinking differently. Probably that's going to change. As far as I'm concerned, being a critic of reality and of the means used to represent it, I rediscovered the technique that Russian film-makers used to call montage. Montage in a deep sense, in the sense in which Eisenstein called El Greco the great montage artist of Toledo.

AP: It's difficult to talk about montage. That is certainly the wrong word. Perhaps one has to say "the system of order." To cast light, beyond the technical aspect, on reflecting the depths.

JLG: What is the Russian word for montage? Isn't there one?

AP: Yes, *montaj*.

JLG: Because for "image," for example, there are two words in Russian. That's useful. It would be interesting to make a dictionary of cinematographic terms in each country. The Americans have two words: "cutting" and "editing" (related to the people called "editors," who are not the same as an "éditeur" in the French senses of the word, who is more like a "producer"). The words don't refer to the same things, and they don't come back to the same idea as "montage."

AP: We have difficulties in talking because of the problem of terminology. There is the same problem with the word "documentaire" (documentary). In French you talk about a "fiction film," while in Russian we call it "an artistic film." Whereas all films could be artistic

in French. There are also two other expressions in Russian, meaning literally "played film" and "non-played film" ("*le cinéma joué*" et le "*cinéma non joué*" —a year after this conversation took place Godard would make the short video *Les enfants jouent à la Russie*—Ed.)

JLG: That's a bit like the Americans, who talk about a "feature film" when it is fiction. "Feature" means characteristics of a face, physiognomy, which goes back to the appearance of the stars. There is a lot that needs understanding about these things, such as the fact that for the French "copie standard" (the copy in which the sound and the visual image are combined), the English say "married print," the Americans "answer print," the Italians "*copia campione*" (first-rate copy)—and that comes from the times of Mussolini. But the misunderstanding about *documentaire*/documentary is one of the most serious. These days, the difference between documentary and fiction, between a documentary film and a commercial film, even if it's called artistic, is that the documentary has a moral attitude that does not apply to the feature film. The "New Wave" always mixed up the two; we always said that Rouch was so fascinating because he made fiction with the force of documentary and that Renoir was too, because he made documentaries with the force of fiction.

AP: It is no longer a problem of direction. Flaherty is often thought to be a documentary film-maker.

JLG: Oh, certainly. He's a documentary film-maker who directed everything and everybody. *Nanouk, Man of Aran, Louisiana Story*—every shot has been carefully directed. When Wiseman made a film about big department stores, *The Store*, he observed the direction and fiction of the department stores themselves.

AP: For the same reasons, I have never even asked about working in the framework of a film or television studio. I have tried to find a place where I could film in peace. Sometimes that happened to be for TV. What is important is being able to speak one's own language, the language of

film. Sometimes people say that film is a synthesis of other art forms; I don't think that's true. In my view, it started at the Tower of Babel, where the division into different languages began. For technical reasons it first appeared after the other art forms, but in its nature it precedes them. I try to make pure cinema, owing nothing to the other arts. I look for a setting that may create an emotional magnetic field around it.

JLG: Being something of a pessimist, I see the end of things before their beginning. For me, cinema is the last manifestation of art, which is a Western idea. Great painting has vanished, great novels have vanished. Cinema was, if you like, a language before Babel, which everyone understood without needing to learn it. Mozart played to princes, the peasants weren't listening, whereas Chaplin played for everybody. The film-makers went in search of the foundations of what is unique about film, and this kind of search is, yet again, something very occidental. It is montage. They talked about it a great deal, especially during times of change. In the twentieth century the biggest change of all was the transformation of the Russian Empire into the USSR; logically, it was the Russians who made the greatest progress in that search, simply because with the revolution society was itself making a montage of before and after.

AP: Film relies on three factors: space, time and real movement. These three elements exist in nature, but among the arts it is only cinema that rediscovers them. Thanks to them it is possible to find the secret movement of matter. I am convinced that film is able to speak the languages of philosophy, science, and art, all at the same time. Perhaps this is the unity that the ancient world was seeking.

JLG: One finds the same thing when one reflects on the history of the idea of projection, as it was born and evolved until it was applied technically in projection equipment. The Greeks imagined the principle in the famous cave of Plato. This Western idea, which was not envisaged by Buddhists, nor by the Aztecs, took form in Christianity, which is based on the hope of

something larger. Later it took a practical form among mathematicians, who invented—again in the West—descriptive geometry. Pacal worked hard at it, again with a religious, mystic after-thought, elaborating his thoughts about cones. The cone is the idea of projection. Later we find Jean-Victor Poncelet, a scholar and officer in Napoleon's army. He was imprisoned in Russia, and it was there that he conceived his treatise on the projective properties of shapes, which is the basis of modern theory on this matter. It was not by chance that he made this discovery in prison. He had a wall in front of him, and he did what all prisoners did: he projected onto it. An urge to escape. Being a mathematician he expressed himself in equations. At the end of the nineteenth century came the means of technical realization. One of the more interesting aspects is that at that time sound movies were ready to go. Edison came to Paris to present a method using a disk synchronized with the visual tape. That was the same principle as that of today in certain studios where a compact disk is coupled with the film to create numerical/digital sound. And that went on! With imperfections, like other images, but it went on and was able to improve the technique. But people didn't want it. The public wanted silent cinema; they wanted to see.

AP: When sound finally arrived, at the end of the twenties, the great film-makers, such as Griffith, Chaplin, and Eisenstein, were afraid of it. They felt that sound represented a step backwards. They were not wrong, but not for the reasons they imagined: sound did not interfere with montage, it came to replace the image.

JLG: The technology of the talkies arrived at the same time as the rise of fascism in Europe, which was also the time when the speaker had arrived. Hitler was a great speaker, and so were Mussolini, Churchill, de Gaulle, and Stalin. The talkie was the triumph of the theatrical scenario over the language that you have been speaking about, the language that existed before the curse of Babel.

AP: To recover that language I use what I call absent images. I think you can hear the images and see the sound. In my films the image is situated next to the sound and the sound next to the image. These exchanges bring about a result that is different from the montage in the time of silent films, or, better, of "non-talking" films.

JLG: Today, image and sound are growing further and further apart; one is more aware of television. The image on the one hand and the sound on the other, and there is no longer a healthy and real association of one with the other. They are merely political reports. That is why in all countries in the world television is in the hands of politics. And now politics is working at creating a new type of image (so-called high definition), a form nobody needs at present. It is the first time that political powers have bothered to say: you will see the images in this film and through this window. An image that would otherwise have the form of a small basement window, one of those little things at pavement level also has the form of a chequebook.

AP: I wonder what television has given us. It can eliminate distance, but only the cinema is able to defeat time, due to the montage technique. This germ of time—the cinema can go through it. But it moved further along that path before the talkie. No doubt because man is greater than language, greater than words. I believe in man more than in his language."

Distance Montage, or The Theory of Distance

Excerpts from *Moyo Kino* [My Cinema]
by Artavazd Pelechian, first edition 1988.

I cannot imagine my films without music. When I write a script, I must from the very beginning have a presentiment of the musical structure of the film, its musical accents, the emotional and rhythmic character of the music which is necessary for every scene. Music is for me not a supplement of the visuals. For me music is above all the idea which expresses itself in unity with the visual image. For me that is also the music of form, by which I wish to say that the form of the musical tone depends at every moment on the form of the whole, on its composition and duration.

As already emphasized, the change of one piece of the work always forced me into a restructuring of the whole. I would like to delve further into this problem: Whenever I removed this or that material detail, I had to replace it. Not only for thematic reasons, but also in accordance with that basic law which applies to the length of the whole film as well as to the length of each of its scenes. In this sense, the film almost resembles a musical work. My reason for replacing the excised material with other material was not to be able to rail attention to a certain fact.

It was much more important to me not to lose that theme which was supposed to ring forth on exactly this point, at exactly this moment in the film. In cutting out a scene, the proportions of the film, the compositional time were destroyed. In order to rescue this compositional time, I had sometimes had to edit in neutral material, even if its visual value was inferior. (In this connection I would like to refer to the scene with the defective auto belching smoke and similar scenes).

The same can be said of the work on the soundtrack, for which the strict laws of compositional time apply. For every element of sound the correspondingly precise "dose" of length and strength of sound must be found and an exact balance in the movement of sound achieved.

Since the discovery of the sound movie many varying definitions of the roll of sound in movies have been developed. Sound (including music) can, according to these definitions, be understood as part of the presentation of subject, illustration, accompaniment, stimulant of a mood, or a

contrapuntal element. In my practice I came gradually to understand that none of these definitions was satisfactory for me, that the potential possibilities of sound are substantially broader and richer than any of them. My goal was an audio-visual correlation which was more like a chemical combination of elements, rather than a mere physical mixing of them. And suddenly I made the discovery that in my efforts to achieve greater significance and expressivity I edited not only the soundtrack but also the visual section, because I had begun to violate those techniques and conventions of montage which I had previously sought to observe. I would like to direct the main attention of this theoretical work to this "disruption."

One of Eisenstein's basic theses has been known for a long time: one scene in a montage is confronted with another one, thus bringing about a thought, a judgment, a conclusion. The montage-theories of the 1920s focused their attention on the relationship between neighboring scenes. Eisenstein called this the "montage seem" ("*montaznyj styk*"). Vertov called it an "interval."



The experience of my work on *We* convinced me that I was interested in something different, that the primary meaning and primary accent of montage work for me lay not in bringing scenes together but in tearing them apart. Not in "patching up" but in "ripping up." It became apparent that the interesting thing for me was not bringing together two pieces of a montage, but disentangling them by means of inserting a third, a fifth, a tenth piece between them.

If I have two leading scenes, each with an important load of meaning, then my goal is not to push them together, to correlate them, but rather to create distance between them. Rather than on the seem between these two scenes, I hit the meaning of the idea which I want to express though an interaction of the two scenes over many links in a chain. This achieves a substantially stronger and deeper expression of meaning than can be reached by direct pasting together. The expressiveness is thereby increased and the informational capacity of the film grows colossally.

I call this montage, distance montage. I would like to illustrate the "mechanics" of this distance montage on the example of material from my own films. The one and only goal of these "mechanics" is to express the thoughts which move me, to mediate my philosophical position to the viewer.

In *We* the first leading element comes right at the beginning of the film. The film begins with a pause, which is followed by a scene of a girl's face. The visual significance of this scene is not yet known to the viewer. He is only given a feeling of pensiveness and unease. Here the music begins and then comes the pause of a fade-out. For the second time the girl's face appears after 500 meters of film, together with the same symphonic chord. In the finale of the film, in the repatriation episode, this leitmotif of the montage once again appears for the third time —this time, however, only in sound: the symphonic chord is repeated in a scene in which people come onto a balcony. It would be easily possible for someone to see a mere repetition in such a structure. Yet the function of these elements of

montage does not lead to mere repetition. The process of repetitively employed scenes was also used in my first film *Mountain Watch*, which tells of selfless young men who secure train traffic in the high mountain passes of Armenia. The film begins and ends with the same scene, in which mountain-climbing workers can be seen walking with lanterns with the sky in the background. There is a gap between these scenes. Yet in this film the gap (like the sameness of the scenes) does not create a sense of distance, but rather leads to repetition, causes a return to the mood of the outset, which makes for a lyrical finale.

Such a process was also used in *The Earth of the People*. In a film which was constructed according to a completely different method of montage: according to an associative confrontation of scenes which are bound together by an unitary theme. Here the point is the constant discovery of the beauty of the world which man completes with his life and his work. All this is shown on the example of a working day in a large city. This film begins and ends with the Rodin



sculpture *The Thinker* revolving on screen, a sculpture which is well known to everyone and has long been a symbol of the eternal expression of human thought. Apart from its repetitive function, giving the film a poetic finish, we are able to ascertain, here, its potential function on the distance montage level. At the end of the film, Rodin's sculpture acquires a new, qualitative meaning which differs from its original meaning; the last scene opens a new cycle of thought, the development of which goes beyond the limits of the film.

In *We* the functions of the repetitive montage elements go far beyond those in the films *Mountain Watch* and *The Earth of the People*. In *We* they serve entirely the general construction of a distance effect. A scene which is shown at an appropriate point reveals its full range of meaning only after a certain time during which the consciousness of the viewer constructs not only a montage connection between the repeated elements but also between their respective surroundings.

In this way the fundamental leading elements only give an extremely

condensed idea of the theme, but at the same time they help because of their connection across large gaps to develop meaning and the evolution of those scenes and episodes with which they had no direct connection. Every time these elements appear in a different context, with varying conceptual concretion. And the most important thing is the montage of the contexts.

With a change of the contexts we achieve a deepening and development of the theme. And when the symphonic chord sounds in the *We* finale, then the meaning of the girl shown at the beginning of the film is revealed. In this threefold repetition (the girl at the beginning of the film, the girl in the middle and the people on the balcony at the finale) we see the main pillar of the distance montage. In *We*, however, there are also other visual and acoustic leading elements. In the first half of the film they appear in this succession: sighing, choral singing, hands in closeup, pictures of mountains.

Then these elements branch off; some parts of the visuals and of the soundtrack

squeeze themselves into other areas, dimensions and other courses of action. They partially jump into other episodes, meet with other elements and situations. But in that moment when the girl appears for the second time, the fragmented elements regroup and thereby receive new tasks and are assigned new consequences, a new form, so that they fulfill a new function.

First comes the choir, then the sighing (which turns into a scream)—then follow hands and, finally, mountains again. I repeat again: The distance montage can be based on visual as well as acoustic elements, but also on every possible combination of picture and sound. I organized my films with the help of such combinations of elements because they were supposed to resemble a living organism with a complex system of inner connections and interactions.

I am convinced that cinematic art which is based on the method of distance montage is capable of showing and explaining such combinations of known and unknown phenomena in the environment



surrounding us as escape the sort of cinematic art which is based on the theory of the "interval" and the "seem" between elements existing side-by-side. The cinema of the distance montage is also able to develop all forms of movement—from the lowest and most basic to the highest and most complicated. It is able simultaneously to speak the language of art, of philosophy and of science. At this point a reference to the descent of the concept "cinematographer" seems in order: it comes from the Greek and means "recorder of movement."

*

I view the film *We together* with my previous films as "laboratory work." The method discovered by me for creating a picture does not yet come to full expression in these films. Therefore, these films do not represent the final result of my "laboratory work" but merely a preliminary result, a stage, which was very important to me, however.

Up to now I have only worked with documentary material. In dramatic films this experience will help to create an

authentic and convincing situation and atmosphere, will help to produce dramatic tension. I believe that the principles of distance montage can and must also be applied in dramatic films.

With the performance of the actors and the color, the dramatic film can help this method to unfold all of its possibilities, which do not then remain limited to a merely authentic milieu.

However, here I regard it as necessary to use all those possibilities of the cinematic art which were discovered by our teachers. Yet, at the same time, the cinema must find new possibilities of artistic expression.

It is in this sense that I quoted the old story about the discovery of the wheel.

In closing I would like to add the following: if Vertov, who used the montage method which predicated side-by-side existence of elements, beckoned the filmmakers into "the open field," into relativity of space and time (in Albert Einstein's theory of relativity), so does the method of distance

montage transcend the borders beyond which our imaginations, our spatial and temporal laws no longer apply. Those borders, beyond which those who are born do not know whom they kill and those who die do not know who gave them birth.

March 1971 - January 1972
Translated from German into English
by Cheiyce M. Kramer





2021 Program

PARIS

DAMIEN HIRST *CHERRY BLOSSOMS*

June 1, 2021 → January 2, 2022

In Spring 2021, the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain invites British artist Damien Hirst to unveil his latest paintings, the *Cherry Blossoms*. The result of two years of intense work in his London studio, the series is part of Hirst's career-long investigation into painting and his desire to return to the pure immediacy of this element of his practice. *Cherry Blossoms* marks the artist's first museum exhibition in France.

The *Cherry Blossoms* reinterpret, with playful irony, the traditional subject of landscape painting. Hirst combines thick brushstrokes and elements of gestural painting, referencing both Impressionism and Pointillism, as well as Action Painting. The monumental canvases, which are entirely covered in dense bright colors, envelope the viewer in a vast landscape that traverses the boundaries of figuration and abstraction. *Cherry Blossoms* are at once a subversion and homage to the great artistic movements of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They are part of the pictorial investigation carried out by Hirst since the start of his career, which explores color, beauty, perception and the role of the artist. After studying in Leeds and then Goldsmiths College of Art in London in the late eighties, Damien Hirst quickly became the face of the group that came to be known as the Young British Artists. These artists, which dominated the British art world in the nineties, shared a taste for experimentation and art viewed as provocative by some. Hirst's *Natural History* series—in which bodies of animals are framed in formaldehyde-filled tanks—soon became emblematic of both the artist and the entire contemporary art scene. Painting has always played an essential role in Hirst's work: "I've had a romance with painting all my life, even if I avoided it. As a young artist, you react to the context, your situation. In the 1980s, painting wasn't really the way to go." Hirst made initial forays into retro abstract expressionist styles, what he has himself described as a "paint how you feel" approach.

He quickly, however, began to look at 1960's minimalism, embarking on his conceptually endless *Spot Painting* series in the late eighties. In this series, colored dots, which appear to have been painted by a machine, erase all traces of human intervention.

The ironically named *Visual Candy* series (1993–95), meanwhile, made up of thick splats of paint and exuberant superimposed colors, celebrated the pleasures of painting.

With *Cherry Blossoms*, begun shortly after Hirst's huge and complex sculptural project *Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable* in Venice (2017), the artist revisits the spontaneous joy of painting. The imagined mechanical painter, omnipresent in the *Spot and Spin Paintings* series, is replaced here by the fallibility of the hand of the artist working in his studio.

"The *Cherry Blossoms* are about beauty

and life and death. They're extreme—there's something almost tacky about them. Like Jackson Pollock twisted by love. They're decorative but taken from nature. They're about desire and how we process the things around us and what we turn them into, but also about the insane visual transience of beauty—a tree in full crazy blossom against a clear sky. It's been so good to make them, to be completely lost in color and in paint in my studio. They're garish and messy and fragile and about me moving away from Minimalism and the idea of an imaginary mechanical painter and that's so exciting for me."



↑ Photo: Prudence Cuming Associates. © Damien Hirst and Science Ltd. All rights reserved, DACS 2020.

2021 Program

MILAN

FONDATION CARTIER AND TRIENNALE MILANO ANNOUNCE A GROUNDBREAKING CULTURAL PARTNERSHIP

Triennale Milano and the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris, have launched a collaboration. As part of this venture, Fondation Cartier will have a direct presence in the exhibition areas of the Palazzo dell'Arte in Milan.

This new approach to partnership between these two European cultural institutions highlights a shared vision of contemporary culture and artistic creation, despite their different origins, statutes, and national backgrounds.

Both Triennale Milano and the Fondation Cartier are characterized by their international and multidisciplinary approaches. Their programs include contemporary art, architecture, design, performing arts, fashion, and cinema, alongside science and philosophy, with a consistent focus on the major issues and challenges of the contemporary world.

The reason behind this close long-term partnership, rather than undertaking a series of individual events, is the belief that in this difficult and uncertain moment in human history, time is necessary in the search for compelling new visions and

perspectives. Accordingly, over the coming years, Triennale Milano and the Fondation Cartier will develop a series of joint projects in Milan, Paris, and around the world.

It will be a dense program of exhibitions, each accompanied by live performances, lectures, and debates.

Working closely with artists, designers, and scientists, Triennale Milano and the Fondation Cartier will launch a new kind of geo-culture. Fluid, but rooted in the values of the two institutions, this geoculture will generate innovation, bringing exhibitions and ideas from Paris and Milan all around the world.

CLAUDIA ANDUJAR *LA LOTTA YANOMAMI*

October 17, 2020 → February 7, 2021

Triennale Milano and the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain are pleased to present the largest exhibition to date dedicated to the work and activism of Brazilian artist Claudia Andujar. For over five decades, she devotes her life to photographing and protecting the Yanomami, one of Brazil's largest indigenous groups. While their territory is more than ever threatened today by illegal gold mining aggravated by the propagation of Covid-19, the exhibition *Claudia Andujar: La lotta Yanomami* has taken on renewed relevance in the context of the humanitarian and environmental crisis exacerbated by the pandemic.

LES CITOYENS

Guillermo Kuitca on the collection of the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain

March → September 2021

With the exhibition *Les Citoyens*, presented exclusively at Triennale Milano, the Argentinian artist Guillermo Kuitca takes a look at the collection of the Fondation Cartier through the exhibition of 120 works by 28 artists he has chosen and linked according to a unique and personal journey.

Les Citoyens presents itself, in the words of Guillermo Kuitca, as a "solar system without a sun" made of connections that "weave a network of senses and sensations" and reveals unprecedented links between the works selected by himself from among the nearly 1600 artworks from the 400 artists that make up the Fondation Cartier collection.

The artist therefore offers a personal journey within the collection where ideas of ensembles and constellations, groups and individuals, of the whole and the fraction, of community and polyphony, of relationships and otherness, answer each other in multiple voices.

With paintings, drawings, photographs, installations, sculptures, or videos, the exhibition also showcases the Fondation Cartier's philosophy, its curiosity for different geographies, its singular way of working with artists, its long term commitment to them and its sensitivity to our world's major issues.

RAYMOND DEPARDON

October 2021 → March 2022

The Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain and the Triennale Milano are presenting the first solo exhibition of French photographer and filmmaker Raymond Depardon in Italy. Specially created by the artist for the Triennale Milano, this large-scale exhibition brings together some of the artist's most emblematic photographs, some of which were taken in Italy. After Milan, the Fondation Cartier will present this exhibition at the Power Station of Art in Shanghai in the fall of 2022, demonstrating its commitment to the international influence of art and artists to ever wider and more varied audiences.

This exhibition extends the dialog between Raymond Depardon and the Fondation Cartier that began in the 1990s, and reflects the importance of the artist's work in its collection.



↑ Claudia Andujar, *Collective house near the Catrimani river, Roraima, 1976*. Collection of the artist.
© Claudia Andujar.

SHANGHAI

TREES

Power Station of Art

July → October 2021

Following a resounding success in Paris in 2019, the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain is presenting the exhibition *Trees* in Shanghai, in collaboration with the Power Station of Art.

The exhibition *Trees* echoes the latest scientific research that sheds new light on trees, great protagonists of the living world. Organized in cooperation with anthropologist Bruce Albert, it brings together a community of artists, botanists, and philosophers such as Francis Hallé, Stefano Mancuso, Luiz Zerbini, Emanuele Coccia and Fabrice Hyber who, through their aesthetic or scientific careers, have established a strong and intimate bond with trees.

This exhibition at the Power Station of Art—an institution with which the Fondation Cartier has maintained a close relationship since 2018 through the exhibition of its collection and those of architects Junya Ishigami and Jean Nouvel—will be enriched with the presence of Chinese artists.

RAYMOND DEPARDON

Power Station of Art

Fall 2022

The Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain is presenting, in collaboration with the Power Station of Art, the first solo exhibition of French photographer and filmmaker Raymond Depardon in China. This large-scale exhibition brings together some of the artist's most emblematic photographs. The Fondation Cartier will present this exhibition in Shanghai in the fall of 2022, after unveiling it in Milan in 2021, demonstrating its commitment to the international influence of art and artists to ever wider and more varied audiences. This exhibition extends the dialog between Raymond Depardon and the Fondation Cartier that began in the 1990s, and reflects the importance of the artist's work in its collection.



↑ Luiz Zerbini, *Coisas do Mundo*, 2018, acrylic on canvas, 240 × 360 cm, Collection Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris. Photo © Pat Kilmore



↑ Raymond Depardon, Raymond Privat, Monique Rouvière and Marcel Privat, *Le Villaret, Le Pont-de-Montvert, Lozère*, 1993. © 2020 Raymond Depardon

Media partners



As a pillar of cultural life, France Culture brings together knowledge, ideas and creative disciplines to shed light on contemporary issues, on its FM and digital channels. France Culture aims to celebrate national and world cultural heritage, and is accompanying Artavazd Pelechian and Sarah Sze for their exhibition at the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain Paris from October 24, 2020 to April 25, 2021.

For more info: franceculture.fr



Konbini

Founded in 2008 by Lucie Beudet and David Creuzot, Konbini is the leader in information and entertainment of the under-30s in France, bringing together more than 27 million people around its content each month. A media reference, Konbini has convinced and engaged an entire generation by offering new creative publications through innovative journalistic proposals, always concerned with respecting the values of progress, diversity and protection of the planet. Konbini is pleased to partner up with the Fondation Cartier for the exhibitions Artavazd Pelechian, *Nature* and Sarah Sze, *Night into Day*.

For more info: konbini.com

les Inrocks.com

Since 1986, *Les Inrockuptibles* have distinguished themselves by their editorial standards, the singularity of their biases and their spirit of independence. Pioneers and prescribers, they share their discoveries with impertinence, and support artistic creation. A loyal partner of the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, *Les Inrocks* are proud to support the next exhibitions: Artavazd Pelechian, *Nature* and Sarah Sze, *Night into Day*, from October 24 to April 25, 2021.

For more info: lesinrocks.com

Le Monde

Established in 1944, *Le Monde* newspaper has grown into a media company that now also publishes themed supplements and the magazine *M*. The group privileges independence, rigor, and exacting editorial standards. Every month, it attracts 22 million readers, Internet and mobile users. The publication provides daily and continuous coverage of French and international current events, as well as economic and cultural news. The daily newspaper devotes four pages to culture with in-depth articles and portfolios, and offers videos on its website and mobile applications.

Le Monde is delighted to collaborate with the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain for the exhibitions Artavazd Pelechian, *Nature* and Sarah Sze, *Night into Day*, and to share its enthusiasm and support of these events with its readers.

For more info: lemonde.fr

LA SEPTIÈME OBSESSION

La Septième Obsession was born in 2015 to build a space for contemporary cinephilia, devoid of chapels and borders. We defend an innovative, avant-garde and aesthetically powerfully inhabited cinema, for a young audience, curious and eager for new ways of thinking about art and its possibilities. The magazine is now a reference for young moviegoers aged 18 to 35. *La Septième Obsession* is particularly proud and happy to support the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain on the exhibitions Artavazd Pelechian, *Nature* and Sarah Sze, *Night into Day* from October 24, 2020 to April 25, 2021.

For more info: laseptiemeobsession.com

Télérama

Télérama likes to share its curiosities, top selections and its enthusiasm for various artists and their work through reviews and articles in its weekly magazine and via continuous coverage on its website, its app and its networks. The magazine also organizes large-scale events likely to interest its readers, and partners major arts institutions, thereby promoting arts and culture. Privileging discovery, novelty and creativity, the magazine allows readers to hold on to their bearings in times of crisis, to find a certain levity, and to develop fresh perspectives for tomorrow's world. *Télérama* is pleased to accompany the exhibitions Artavazd Pelechian, *Nature* and Sarah Sze, *Night into Day* at the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain.

For more info: telerama.fr

TROISCOULEURS

TROISCOULEURS is a cultural magazine primarily focused on cinema, monthly and free, published by mk2. It relays and supports the best of cultural news, and explores the latest trends. Distributed in all the movie theaters of the mk2 network and in more than 250 cultural venues, it strives to make all art forms accessible to as many people as possible and promote creative and innovative cinema through offbeat, educational and committed contents.

After celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Fondation Cartier and collaborating on several exhibitions, TROISCOULEURS is pleased to partner up with the events Artavazd Pelechian, *Nature* and Sarah Sze, *Night into Day*.

For more info: troiscouleurs.fr

Information

The Fondation Cartier is open from Tuesday to Sunday,
from 11am to 8pm. Closed on Mondays.
Late closing on Tuesday, at 10pm.

ACCESS

261 Boulevard Raspail 75014 Paris
— Métro Raspail or Denfert-Rochereau (lines 4 and 6)
— RER Denfert-Rochereau (line B)
— Bus 38, 68, 88, 91
— Vélib' and disabled parking at 2 rue Victor Schoelcher.

VISITING CONDITIONS

To protect your health and those around you, wearing a mask
required everywhere in the spaces of the Fondation Cartier pour
l'art contemporain.

In order to guarantee your safety and that of our team, the
Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain has adapted its visiting
conditions.

— Tickets can only be purchased online on fondationcartier.com
only. Tickets are in the visitor's name.

— We are operating with a reduced capacity. Please respect the
time slot reserved at the time of booking.

— A designated route has been put in place to allow visitors to
discover the exhibition in a way that allows us to respect social
distancing requirements.

Fondation Cartier cultural mediators are on hand to help you
respect these guidelines and ensure that your visit is an enjoyable
one. Thank you for your understanding.

SOLO TICKETS

Purchase of tickets on site or on fondationcartier.com

The tickets allows the access to the exhibitions Artavazd
Pelechian *Nature*, and Sarah Sze, *Night into Day*.

- Regular admission €11
- Reduced admission* €7,50

* Under age 25, "carte senior," "carte famille nombreuse,"
unemployed and beneficiaries of social minima, Maison des
Artistes, partner institutions, ministère de la Culture

- Free admission*

* Children under 13, under age 18 only on Wednesdays, Fondation
Cartier Pass, lcom card, press card, and disability card holders,
students

GROUPS TICKETS

Guided tours are offered on Wednesdays through Fridays
from 11am to 6pm, and on Tuesdays until 8pm.

Self-guided tours

Maximum 10 people

- Adult groups €9/p
- Seniors groups €5/p
- Schools groups €4/p

Guided tours

Maximum 10 people

Duration: 1h

- Adult groups €12/p
- Seniors groups €8/p
- Schools groups €5/p

Information and reservation

+ 33 (0)1 42 18 56 67/50 (from Monday to Friday, 10 am to 6 pm)
info.reservation@fondation.cartier.com

THE LAISSEZ-PASSER PASS

The Laissez-passer Pass provides free and unlimited priority
access to the exhibitions, guided and Family tours, invitations
to events, as well as privileges at many other French cultural
institutions.

Online booking is required for guided tours on
fondationcartier.com

- Annual subscription €30
- Duo Deal* €50

*You and the person of your choice

- Reduced rate* €25

* Students, "carte Senior," "carte famille nombreuse,"
unemployed, Maison des Artistes, partner institutions

- Under 25 €18

- CE (Staff Committee) rate (please consult us)

Sold at the bookshop and at eshop.fondationcartier.com

NOMADIC NIGHTS AND NIGHTS OF UNCERTAINTY

Reservation and calendar on

fondationcartier.com/spectacles-vivants

- Regular admission €12
- Reduced admission* €8

* Students, under age 25, "carte senior," "carte famille nombreuse,"
unemployed and beneficiaries of social minima, Maison des
Artistes, partner institutions, ministère de la Culture

Contact and information

+ 33 (0)1 42 18 56 72 (from Monday to Sunday, 10am to 6pm)

YOUNG VISITORS ACTIVITIES

Reservation and calendar on

fondationcartier.com/family-young-audience

- Single rate €12

BOOKSHOP

The bookshop is open from 11 am to 7 pm and until 9 pm on
Tuesday. Closed on Monday. Located on the upper floor of the
Fondation Cartier, the bookshop offers a wide range of exhibition
catalogs, professional literature, and by-products created for each
exhibition. Payment by credit card is preferred.

Find out more about the publication of the Fondation Cartier on
eshop.fondationcartier.com

GARDEN AND SNACK BAR

The Fondation Cartier's garden is fragile. We kindly ask you to
respect the visiting conditions and help us protect its ecosystem.
The snack bar is open from Tuesday to Sunday (depending on the
weather) in the Fondation Cartier's garden.
Payment by credit card is preferred.



*"I am convinced that cinema can convey certain things that no language in the world can translate.
For me, it goes back to the Tower of Babel, to before the division into different languages."*
Artavazd Pelechian

