

# Tate Live:

## *Cyprien Gaillard and Koudlam*

FREE, Friday 3 July, 22.00  
Turbine Hall, Tate Modern



Cyprien Gaillard *Desniansky Raion* 2007  
courtesy Laura Bartlett Gallery, London and Cosmic Gallery, Paris © The artist

Following a series of short films by artist Cyprien Gaillard, and musical interventions by musician Koudlam, the film *Desniansky Raion* - a collaboration between the artist and musician - will be projected in the Turbine Hall, accompanied by a live music performance. In this work, an exhilarating soundtrack traverses a triptych of film: the illicit joy of an organised fight; a spectacular light display illuminating the façade of a housing block before its destruction; and finally footage of a seemingly desolate, snow-covered housing estate, Desiansky Raion, in Kiev.

Much of Gaillard's work focuses on the remnants of utopian modernist architecture, and the landscapes generated through its eventual social or physical failure or destruction - creating what could be described as anti-monuments, which sometimes result in surprising moments of transcendental beauty. Each section of the triptych addresses what could be perceived as failures of society, but instead it emphasises, through the marriage

of film and music, the co-existence of opposites within the same moment or place, simultaneously evoking both positive and negative reactions. The film begins with footage of a housing estate in Belgrade built in the 1980s. Two towers conjoined by a walk-way create a conceptual, yet bleak, entrance to the work that flows into a disturbing dystopian vision. Found footage shows an organised fight between two rival gangs in St Petersburg: as the violence escalates, the music soars to create an unsettling juxtaposition of joy and hatred within this contemporary battle. It also, perhaps, offers an unwitting remark on the failed visions of totality in the politics of the region. The second section shows footage of a spectacular firework display illuminates the façade of a housing estate in Meaux, in the suburbs of Paris. Once again, as the music takes on a more electronic beat, celebration and destruction merge. Apparently, this light show was staged by the local mayor to bring the community together before the tower block's eventual destruction, creating a temporal

light monument to the memory of their homes, before the building vanishes in a huge cloud of smoke. In the final section, Gaillard has captured an aerial view of a snow-covered housing estate in Kiev, Desniansky Raion. Filmed from a helicopter, the estate appears almost like a post-nuclear landscape devoid of human beings, whilst a sense of forgotten memory is created through Koudlam's more subdued sounds.

A key influence in Gaillard's work is the history of land art and the nature of the 'monument'. Robert Smithson, an artist to whom Gaillard, like many artists of his generation, considers himself indebted wrote, 'Instead of causing us to remember the past like the old monuments, the new monuments seem to cause us to forget the future'. But while his own 'new monuments' are fashioned from rubble, found footage, and debris, his aesthetic is entirely at odds with any ethos of recycling as a progressive activity. He is an artist who wrestles uncomfortably with fixity and 'things'—including, even, the object-documents, framed photographs and sculptures that are part of his practice—and seeks ways for them to operate as part of his ecology of disintegration. The result is a form of poetry of which art objects and actions are the material and temporal elements.

What Gaillard describes as an attitude of 'urban romanticism' is evident both here and, broadly speaking, in his fascination with the demolition of large-scale housing complexes. This attitude inverts the ideals of eighteenth-century Romanticism: while artists of that period reacted against the rationalizing tendencies of the Industrial Revolution by attempting to discover and depict the fearsome power of untamed nature—often staging the artist as lone wanderer far from the crowded city—Gaillard finds a new kind of sublime terror and awe in the unchecked, sprawling vastness of the intensely populated cityscapes built in the second half of the twentieth century. With its non-narrative structure and elegiac mood, *Desniansky Raion* seems consciously to memorialize, rather than document, the present age.

### Biographies

Cyprien Gaillard (France, 1980). His work spans a range of media including photography, film, sculpture, installation and performance. Recent solo exhibitions include *Pruitt-Igoe Falls*, Museum Fridericianum, Kassel (2009) and *Beton Belvedere*, Stroom Den Haag, The Hague, The Netherlands (2009).

Koudlam (1979, France, lives and works in Paris) is a French electronic composer and singer whose influences are diverse, including new rave, Philippe Glass, The Spiral Tribe, A Badalamenti and 90's hits. Koudlam produced his first album *Nowhere* in 2006. In 2008 *Live At Teotihuacan*, which included *Desniansky Raion*, was published by Pan European Recording. Koudlam is finishing his new album which will be out in 2009, with Pan European Recording.

### Curated by

Catherine Wood, Curator (Contemporary Art / Performance), with Kathy Noble, Assistant Curator.  
Production: Gil Leung

### Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the artists, and to Laura Bartlett, Gil Leung and Jo Paton



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