

TRAVEL AND



BE HAPPY?

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The EDF Group Foundation continues its cycle on the issues and ideas that distress our society by mobilizing the gaze of artists. The exhibition “Travel and Be Happy?” shown from May 2022 to April 2023 in Paris was a public success and is presented here in its traveling version.

In asking the question, Do we need to travel to be happy?, we wanted to upend the assumption that travel is an indispensable element of well-being. The measures taken by governments to fight Covid-19 highlighted the degree of our dependence on movement. Who could have imagined that the concept of mobility would be so impeded? Thanks to contemporary art, we mobilize creativity to illuminate this reality. We thus shake up the allure of travel—often perceived as an unequivocal vector of knowledge, dialogue, and development. We are attempting an exercise in lucidity. If travel at times enlightens our consciences, let us not forget the ecological footprint of its infrastructures, and the impact of tourism that often transforms foreign lands into places of consumption. Our travels imply the use of technologies that run on fossil fuels, without the possibility of replacing them with ecologically and socially responsible technologies. Let’s remember that when it comes to travel, the inequalities are striking: while some populations migrate out of necessity, others travel for pleasure. Travel, an element of happiness for many, also appears to be a barometer of the world’s unlivable state. The latest report from the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) sounds the alarm by reminding us of the urgency to act against climate change. In 2019, 31% of greenhouse gas emissions in France were due to transportation. In 2020, the pandemic halted the tourism industry—one of the leading sectors in the world according to the World Tourism Organization—within a matter of days. In a finite world, can we imagine infinite mobility without damage?



Ange LECCIA

Arrangement. Globes terrestres
[Arrangement. Terrestrial globes]

1991-2021

70 plastic and LED globes

The *Arrangements* are installations that highlight industrial objects whose out-of-sync confrontation summons contradictions and poetry. Here, the artist proposes a vision that is as surprising as it is utopian: what if we had a multitude of planet Earths at our disposition? Yet this fantasy of replacement Earths or of colonizing other planets paradoxically evokes the uniqueness and fragility of our current one.



Mark WALLINGER

Threshold to the Kingdom

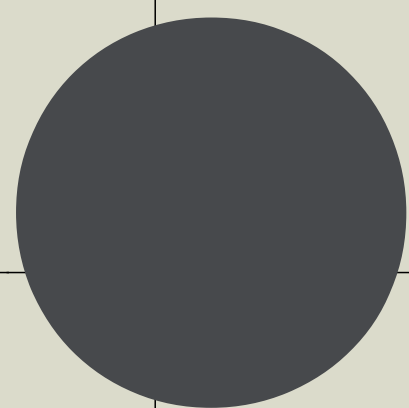
2000

Video, 11'12"

"I was afraid of airports, not planes."

In this sequence, the artist takes an interest in the airport microcosm. He stages the symbolism of arriving to a territory. Close family members await the return of some individuals, while others anonymously appear in an unknown land. The undifferentiation of the travelers' origins reinforces the impression of a birth, or of an entry into the beyond. This ambiguity nods to the uncertain fate of immigrants arriving in a new country.

MAKING THE WORLD FIT FOR LIVING



For a long time, traveling was a physical and psychological ordeal. Physical, because it meant being exposed to bad weather and to the fatigue of the efforts of traveling. Psychological, because travel was synonymous with isolation: one left one's daily life, one's loved ones, to reach the unknown. Uncertainty was the rule, and chance and adventure altered plans.

The Industrial Revolution led to the development of transporting goods and labor. It was necessary to increase the number of paved roads for this. Animals first used them before mechanics and motors took over, in turn reducing exhaustion and increasing speed. In order to regulate travel and make it a foreseeable activity, the world had to be organized for this purpose. The Earth, once it became accessible and visitable throughout its great widths, could be exploited. Each technology requires its own infrastructure: ports, airports, freeways, but also antennas, pipelines, cables, and waves to carry energy and allow for connection. From the planet's major roadways to hiking trails, itineraries have been established to link territories, to divide the planet up into squares. It is accessible and available everywhere. Some are already dreaming of interstellar space.



Martin PARR

Kuta, Bali, INDONESIA

1993

Photograph

The photographer begins to document the development of mass tourism in the 1990s, with the beginnings of globalization. He points his lens toward apparently banal scenes and focuses on certain details, often ironically. The Americanization of the world also comes with globalization. This is what we find in this image that displays the McDonald's symbol in Bali. Martin Parr seeks to reveal a certain dystopia and counterfeiting in this shot.



Inka et Niclas LINDERGÅRD

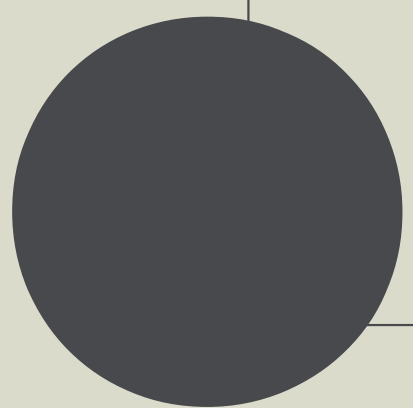
Watching Humans Watching X

2010

Photograph

Inka and Niclas Lindergård photograph tourists looking at a landscape or taking photos of themselves. The two artists displace our gaze through their lens: the landscape itself isn't the center of attention, but rather the point of view of whoever is traveling in the environment. What emotions does this provoke? A feeling of solitude, tranquility, or admiration?

THE PLEASURES OF EASY MOBILITY



Combined with the promotion of certain destinations, the ease of circulation feeds the desire to travel. So much so that tourists' leisure has become an existential norm associated with vacations. Traveling for pleasure appears to be a valued and rewarding activity. Everywhere, places are specially outfitted to welcome visitors. Tourism is a key element of all nations' development strategies. Before the pandemic, the tourism sector was considered one of the world's leading industries, with 1.4 billion international arrivals. If it is the norm to speak of "mass tourism," let us not assume that everyone has the financial means to travel for pleasure. It requires a budget surplus that is not evenly distributed. For some time now, the tourism sector has encountered strong contradictions: a saturation of "over-tourism," conflicts of use, greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs), challenges with tourist facilities, the policy of competitive pricing, etc. Furthermore, by calling into question the safety of mobility, the shock of the pandemic has been accompanied by numerous debates about the future of tourism. The downturn in tourist activities revealed the fragility of economies that are dependent on tourism. Will we have to reduce the frequency of travel to save a planet that travel claims to help us discover? Or, with the help of green technologies, will we be able to dream of a more or less decarbonized tourism industry? In the meantime, is planting trees everywhere to compensate for our greenhouse gas emissions a solution, or a mirage?



Santiago SIERRA

Bâche suspendue en face d'une crique
[Banner Suspended in Front of a Cove]

2001

Photograph, chromogenic print

Mallorca is inhabited by a German-speaking community, owners of a large part of the tourist infrastructure. With this provocative installation, Santiago Sierra denounces the imbalance between the local life and tourism.

Installed with the approval of the town council, this banner was taken down after just several hours following complaints before being reinstalled, and then taken down yet again, maybe by the residents themselves.

We can read on the banner: "Locals, out."

Mali ARUN

Paradisus

2016

Video, 8'30"

By first evoking calm and lush nature, Mali Arun leads us toward the genesis of the world. Then the charm and silence fade as tourists from all over the world suddenly appear in this paradise. This video shows the consequences of mass tourism. Paradoxically, tourism is only possible because of human development. To access nature, we make a part of it disappear.



Mali ARUN



Mali ARUN



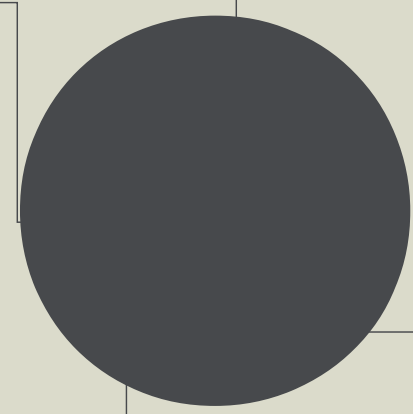
Mali ARUN



Mali ARUN



MIGRATION INEQUALITIES



Greenhouse gases (GHGs) are mainly emitted by rich countries, or by the richest populations in so-called developing countries. Often dependent on agricultural production, fishing, or even hunting and gathering, the poorest populations are the first to face climate change's consequences. In more and more places, global disruptions are creating very concrete effects: reduced agricultural production, water shortages, rising sea levels, resource shortages, and meteorological disasters. Collateral damage can occur. They aggravate difficulties, such as geopolitical tensions leading to wars and conflicts related to water access, or, when water becomes scarce, competing water usage. When lands are inhospitable, their inhabitants are forced to leave. According to a World Bank study,¹ the worsening effects of climate change in three densely populated regions of the world (sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and South Asia) could force more than 140 million people to migrate within their own nations by 2050. By contributing to climate disruption, the lifestyle of the inhabitants of rich countries leads to survival migration of the most precarious populations.

1. GROUNDSWELL, "Preparing For Internal Climate Migration," World Bank, 2018.



Kimsooja

Bottari Truck-Migrateurs **[Migratory-Truck Bottaris]**

2007

Video, 9'20"

Bottaris are bundles of traditional Korean fabric in which travelers pack their belongings to move around. Here, they have been loaded onto a pickup truck that crosses Paris, passing through the symbolic places of République and the Bastille. Kimsooja speaks about forced exile from a native country and difficult integration into the host country.



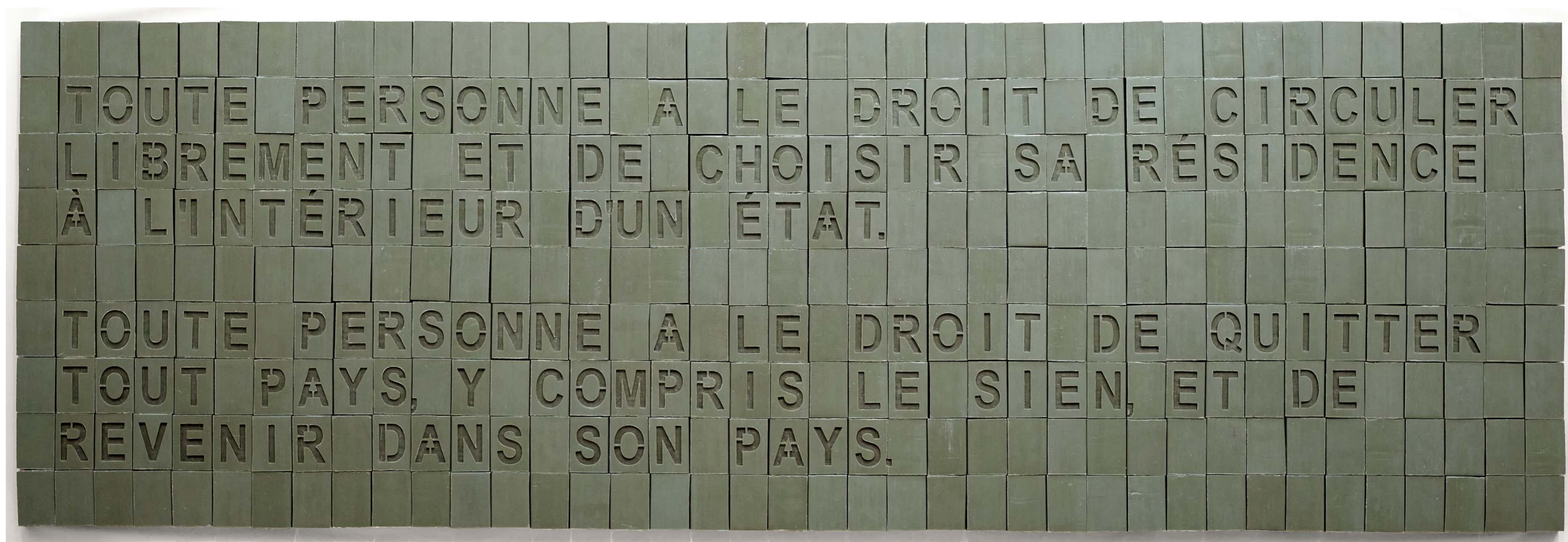
Simon FAITHFULL

Going Nowhere 1.5

2016

Video, 8'43"

Filmed by a drone, this video by the artist shows a figure walking along the coastline of an island in the North Sea, in a sort of Sisyphean endeavor. As the tide rises, the contours of the sand shrink until it completely disappears, bringing the artist with it. Evoking climate change and rising oceans, he questions travel in a declining world.



Taysir BATNIJI

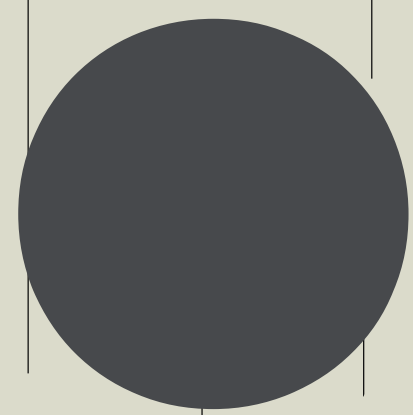
L'homme ne vit pas seulement de pain #2
[Man Does not Live on Bread Alone #2]

2012, reproduction 2022

Article 13 of the Universal Declaration
of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen
engraved on Marseille soap

This work is composed of Marseille soaps on which article 13 of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen is engraved. By choosing this material, the artist reminds us of the fragility of the rights we presume to be carved in marble. He positions us before our responsibility to protect this fundamental law. Can we really wash our hands of it?

THE CONFRONTATION OF IMAGINATIONS



The unpredictability of the present day accentuates the spirit of the imaginary. The perspectives are diverse and apparently contradictory, but they all contribute to the vigorous debates around the notorious ecological transition.

Should we organize to reduce our movement to enter a paradigm where sobriety would be the new rule? Does this imply a return to a certain rarity of travel, which would accentuate its meaning by saving it from banality? Would we travel less often, less far, or longer in a society where we would live, think, produce, and consume differently?

In the name of economic realism, should we grow green and offset our GHG emissions—for example, by planting as many trees as possible? Will technologies provide ecologically efficient solutions within a reasonable time frame?

Or will immobile travel, supported by virtual technologies, impose its consensual reclusion as the future of travel? Our wanderings will find refuge in a parallel world that will allow our digital twins to explore spaces seemingly relieved of the frustrations and threats of reality.

Or should we step on the gas and push the old world to the limit, exploring the final frontiers of our travels? Will we be able to explore and colonize a substitute planet when ours, polluted, heated, and unlivable, is no longer fit for human habitation?



Barbara et Michael LEISGEN

Soleil d'hiver
[Winter Sun]

1973

Photograph

In this work, the human body tries to melt in the décor, to commune with the natural elements that surround it. The artists delicately and poetically communicate their powerlessness before an abused environment, just as much as their attempt to renew harmonious contact with it.

Stefan EICHHORN

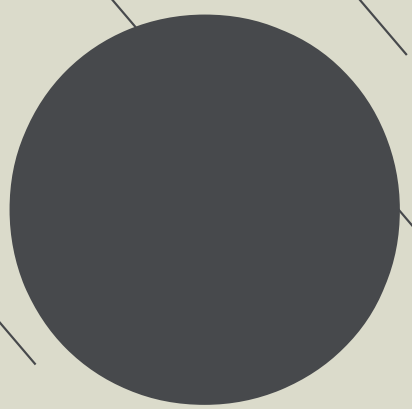
A Monument For Fallen Stars

2020

Nine patches, hand embroidery

A Monument for Fallen Stars introduces the perspective of space travel, but above all it evokes its limits. Since the end of the 20th century, private space enterprises have multiplied. These patches are from nine companies whose projects have failed. These naive but passionate dreams reflect our excessive fantasies of travel. And if today technical progress offers us the infinite and the beyond, it is also confronted with economic and ecological problems.

GETTING CLOSER TO THE WORLD



Journeys could bring us closer to the world.

One couldn't stay silent about the enlightening aspect of travel when it is confronted with the sometimes difficult diversity of reality. It makes it possible to concretize, at the discretion of disorientation and bodies and consciences settling in, the idea of a common world—a single world, a spatial and temporal continuum of mundiality. The experience of reality is indispensable to knowledge. Let us not only consider intellectual knowledge, but also knowledge acquired through skin and feet, which intensifies the sensoriality that daily life blunts. It is a question of examining the way in which travel weaves connections with otherness, weaves relationships with the living, human, and non-human. An ecosophy, the sensitive and philosophical dimension of ecology, would be developed. So travel becomes the vector of an anthropological work that would reenchant human beings among the living, in all conscientiousness, by allowing an ethical elaboration of an existence more in tune with the social and ecological emergency.



Abraham POINCHEVAL

Gyrovague, le voyage invisible
[Gyrovague, the invisible journey]

2011-2012

Photograph

Used to extreme performances, here the artist documents his crossing of the Alps from France to Italy. Accompanied by his *gyrovague*, a circular dwelling, in the summer of 2011 he embarked on a solo journey during which walking became a way of life. Pushing his *gyrovague* for miles, the artist seeks to accomplish an extreme act, questions our relationship to natural space, and experiences absolute freedom.

Mike BRODIE

***Untitled #4558, #4353, #5257, #5392,
série A Period of Juvenile Prosperity***

2006-2009

Photographs

With these four images, Mike Brodie displays his interest in travel as a way of life. He presents a striking picture of American train hoppers, those young people who crisscross the country by jumping on moving trains. These vagabond youths seeking absolute freedom make travel an end in itself. However, paradoxically, the escape from a certain world still depends on its streams of mobility.



Mike BRODIE



Mike BRODIE



Mike BRODIE





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Lenders and credits

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Lender: Galerie Jousse Entreprise

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Mali Arun

EDF Group Foundation collection © Mali Arun / Thomas Ozoux

Simon Faithfull

Loan from the artist © Simon Faithfull © Galerie Polaris

Barbara and Michael Leisgen

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On display at the Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain, Nice

Kimsooja

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