



# Raphaël Zarka: Gibellina

ENGLISH

*Raphaël Zarka: Gibellina*

May 28 till August 21 2011

Opening: Saturday May 28, 5 pm and at 4 pm: dialogue  
Lorenzo Benedetti (director SBKM/De Vleeshal) and  
Raphaël Zarka.

Stroom Den Haag, Hogewal 1-9, The Hague

Image front cover: Alberto Burri, Cretto, photomontage (detail),  
circa 1980. Museo Civico d'Arte Contemporanea de Gibellina  
Nuova.

## RAPHAËL ZARKA - GIBELLINA

Stroom Den Haag presents the first solo exhibition in the Netherlands of the versatile French artist Raphaël Zarka (1977, Montpellier). In addition to sculptures and photographs, the exhibition at Stroom features his production *Gibellina Vecchia* (2010). In this short film Zarka meticulously records the monumental artwork Alberto Burri created between 1985 and 1989 on the ruins of the Sicilian town of Gibellina, which was destroyed by an earthquake in 1968.

Raphaël Zarka is fascinated by forgotten spaces and undefined areas, where objects and buildings are reminders of a once promising future. Often they are the rusty remnants of an industrial past that have been transformed into modern ruins, or in the words of one of Zarka's inspirers Robert Smithson, "ruins in reverse". Zarka appropriates these structures, this cultural heritage, and looks into the formal and functional aspects of each object, its history and its ultimate destination.

The exhibition was earlier on display at CAN - Centre d'Art Neuchâtel. At Stroom it can be considered as part of a series of solo exhibitions by young international artists such as Toby Paterson (2007) and Cyprien Gaillard (2009), urban explorers and skateboarders, contemporaries fascinated by the ways in which specific processes and powers shape our (urban) environment.

## WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

*Gibellina* consists of photos, sculptures and videos, made between 2004 and 2011. People might know the work of Zarka through his references to skate culture (most notably his 2007 installation *Riding Modern Art* at the Lyon Biennale). The current show at Stroom focuses less on this aspect of his work and more on the ‘reversed ruins’ he is fascinated by and his interest in various aspects of sculptures, such as the balance between intend and coincidence, appearance and construction, the viewer and user.

Zarka shows us, with his diverse works and in different materials, the deserted landscape, the architectural leftovers, the ruins and the forgotten. He is influenced by both minimalism and land art, and knows how to combine research into art history, science, geometry and the power of forms seamlessly.

This exhibition guide contains information on themes in the work of Zarka, information on the works on show at Stroom and an interview between Zarka and Elisabeth Wetterwald. In this interview Zarka explains how the different aspects of his body of work come together and how they intertwine with his experiences as a skateboarder and a skateboarder’s approach to space, urban places and forms.

## GIBELLINA VECCHIA

For the different works related to Gibellina, Zarka researched this destroyed town and the monumental work *Grande Cretto* by the abstract Italian painter and sculptor Alberto Burri (Città di Castello, 1915 – 1995).

Gibellina is a small city in the mountains of central Sicily that was destroyed by the 1968 earthquake. The ruins of the city are now referred to as Ruderi di Gibellina and remained as they were found after the earthquake. Burri covered the entirety of the ruins in concrete, while referring to the shape of the buildings and the streetscape.

The central work in the exhibition is the video *Gibellina Vecchia* (2010, 10'30). This work not only shows Zarka as a collector of sculptural forms, but also as an essayist and archivist. This short film records the work *Il Grande Cretto* by Burri from the 1980s: large slabs of concrete commemorating the streets and shapes of the former town of Gibellina. In the film the isolated objects are portrayed as motion at rest, merging together various elements like memory, history and archeology.

In the video Zarka follows the work of architects and surveyors who are studying the nature of the territory. He focuses on the everyday life around Burri's work: the students, shepherds and farmers. The tempo of the film evokes a certain desolate loneliness, it makes the ghost town aspect of the ruins almost palpable to the viewer.



Raphaël Zarka, film still from *Gibellina Vecchia*, 2010. Courtesy galerie Michel Rein, Paris. Collection Le Frac Alsace.



Raphaël Zarka, film still from *14 vues de Gibellina Nuova*, 2010. Courtesy galerie Michel Rein, Paris.

The film is a co-production of Stroom Den Haag, Le Frac Alsace (Sélestat, F), Le Grand Café (Saint-Nazaire, F), CAN - Centre d'Art Neuchâtel (CH), Centre culturel français de Palerme et de Sicile / Ambassade de France en Italie (IT), Le Musée du Berry (Bourges, F) and Raphaël Zarka. The video is now part of the collections of the Frac Alsace.

A second video, *14 vues de Gibellina Nuova* (2010, 3'27) shows us fourteen different views of the new Gibellina. After the quake, a new city, Gibellina Nuova, was built some 20 km from the old one. The new city was designed by many of the most prominent artists and architects in Italy, but done in a piecemeal fashion so that the parts of the new city bear little relation to one another or to the indigenous architecture of Sicily. They created a town with wide streets, single two story dwellings surrounded by gardens, piazzas, public gardens, and buildings of postmodern architecture. Artists donated the modern sculptures that adorn every piazza and road junction. Their gifts fill a Modern Art Museum befitting a metropolis.

New Gibellina was built as a showcase for a modern city. The new Gibellina is, however, often considered a failure of modernist urban planning and architecture and the population of the city is slowly dwindling.

The Gibellina project is bigger than these two videos and also includes photographs and what we could call 'deduction' panels.



Raphaël Zarka, *Gibellina*, 2008. Courtesy galerie Michel Rein, Paris.



View from the sky of *Cretto*.

One of the photographs is of a tattooed arm in front of a brick wall. The arm belongs to a friend of Zarka. The form of the tattoo, the redrawing of the spaces between the veins on the arm, is reminiscent of the Cretti series of 'cracked paintings' by Burri. But it also reminds us of that big work by Burri: *Grande Cretto*.

The so-called 'deduction' pieces are inspired by those same cracks that are manifest in Burri's paintings but also in *Grande Cretto*. Originally, Burri wanted to make the concrete *Cretto* work in the form of a square. The photomontage of how his work should have looked is seen on the cover of this exhibition guide. As a painter he wanted to make a large cracked painting in the hills. When the money ran out, the project came to a halt and the *Cretto* work was never finished.

The work by Zarka, *La Déduction de Burri*, refers to this partially finished square, by what Burri could not finish but also by the cracks and 'veins' in the *Cretto* piece. The second panel, *La Déduction de Giovanni Battista* is inspired by an etching of Giovanni Battista Piranesi of a jumbled map of Rome. Also, in the *Gibellina Vecchia* film, you will see a close-up of a mosaic floor that formally refers to the Piranesi etching and Zarka's *Déduction de Giovanni Battista*.

Finally, there is for Zarka a connection between his *Gibellina* research and other works such as the photograph *Chladni* (*Musée de la physique de l'Université de Padoue*) from 2007. The image shows us a scientific instrument of Ernst Florens Friedrich Chladni, a German physicist and musician (1756 – 1827) best known for his research into vibrations.



Raphaël Zarka, *La Déduction de Burri*, 2011. Courtesy galerie Michel Rein, Paris. Copyright Sully Balmasière.



Raphaël Zarka, *La Déduction de Giovanni Battista*, 2011. Courtesy galerie Michel Rein, Paris. Copyright Sully Balmasière.

The photograph shows plates on which Chladni put sand that would then take on certain shapes based on vibrations and sounds made by a bow. It demonstrated how sounds, through vibrations, could be visualized. The vibration tool is as such linked to geometrical abstraction. These vibrations are, for Zarka, also an echo of the Gibellina earthquake.



Raphaël Zarka, *Chladni* (*Musée de la physique de l'Université de Padoue*), 2007. Courtesy galerie Michel Rein, Paris.

## DOCUMENTARY SCULPTURES

I'm just as interested in the history of the objects they refer to as I am in their form.

*Zarka in the interview with Wetterwald.*

Zarka often uses the concept 'documentary sculptures' when discussing his work. In this exhibition we find several examples of this. These works are characterised by a certain level of abstractness, they are close to minimalism for example, but the word 'documentary' underlines that the artist is not solely or simply interested in the formal aspects of these works. Rather, he is interested in the historical aspects of certain spatial forms, in their status as tool, artwork, scientific object or instrument.

Existing forms, from paintings, books, but also forms that only exist as idea, are pulled by Zarka into the domain of sculpture so that they can be considered artworks and demand a certain reflection from the viewer.

Zarka uses several 'categories' of documentary sculpture, such as reprises, replicas, reconstructions, deductions or found objects. The reprises deal with 'retakes' (no copies but interpretations) of existing artworks. Replicas are reconstructions of mainly historical scientific instruments.

Reconstructions are materialisations of virtual objects. The 'objets trouvés' are objects that by a physical and mental re- or displacement are drawn into the domain of art.



Raphaël Zarka, *Studiolo*, 2008. Courtesy galerie Michel Rein, Paris. Copyright Aurélien Mole.



Raphaël Zarka, *Ufficio*, 2010. Courtesy galerie Michel Rein, Paris. Copyright Sully Balmasière.



Raphaël Zarka, *Forme à clé*, 2011. Courtesy galerie Michel Rein, Paris. Copyright Sully Balmasière.



Raphaël Zarka, film still from *La sculpture verte de Montreuil*, 2008. Courtesy galerie Michel Rein, Paris.

*Ufficio* (2010) and *Studiolo* (2008) are three-dimensional spaces recreated after architectural forms in paintings. Zarka researches the historical painterly space with these objects. *Studiolo*, for example, is a wooden model of the cabinet that features in Antonello da Messina's famous painting of Saint Jerome: *San Gerolamo nello studio* dating from 1475.

*Forme à clé* (2011) is also a sculpture that relates to painting but in a very different way. It is a modular, spatial form based on the deduction of a wooden 'peg', an element used to reinforce frames of paintings. Here it is stripped of its functionality and multiplied into a sculpture. *Free Ride as a studiolo* (2009) is a reprise of a modernist, minimalist sculpture by Tony Smith. It looks like a bench; the sort of object that skateboarders tend to be very fond of. The fact that skateboarders use public objects, such as benches and art works, is more than a form of vandalism. Skateboarding is a way to test objects, materials and spaces on their accidental and unintentional properties. To (re)see and (re)use them from a very specific point of view. Maybe even to retake and appropriate them.

The short video *La sculpture verte de Montreuil* (2008, 0'50) was originally part of a series of videos of five places in Montreuil selected by Zarka. The choreographer Julie Desprairies worked with the dancer Elise Ladoué on these locations. The works were filmed and this particular one became part of the oeuvre of Zarka. The name of the artist of this public sculpture is unknown. We see the dancer testing, hitting, touching the sculpture that looks so massive but turns out to make a rather hollow sound.



Raphaël Zarka, *Free Ride as a Studiolo*, 2009. Courtesy galerie Michel Rein, Paris. Copyright Aurélien Mole.

## ABSTRACT FORMS, ACCIDENTAL SCULPTURES

From the series *Les Formes du Repos*, n°11 (2006) is shown. *Les Formes du Repos*, a work he first started in 2001, consists of a series of photographs in which the objects – an abandoned monorail, a concrete breakwater, tunnel tubes and such – manifest themselves as 'involuntary' sculptures.



Raphaël Zarka, *Les Formes du repos n°11*, 2006. Courtesy galerie Michel Rein, Paris.

On this series Zarka says the following in the interview with Elisabeth Wetterwald (2008) that is included further on in this exhibition guide:

What I'm looking for first and foremost are abstract forms, in the strict sense of the term: forms isolated from their context, like parentheses in a narrative. The best example of

this is the *Formes de repos* (*Forms of rest*), a series of photographs that I began taking in 2001, which I add to every now and again. For me, *Formes de repos* is a collection of objects made out of concrete; I think of them as involuntary sculptures and I photograph them as such.

This eleventh picture in the series shows a cluster or configuration of abandoned concrete objects that look monumental, sculptural and so much more esthetic than accidental.

In the *Changer en île* series of photographs – of which two are shown at Stroom – the same search for the accidental, the happenstance-quality of our surroundings is felt. Again emptied from human presences, these works have a timeless feeling, as if one is looking in on anthropological finds from lost civilizations. The first photograph in the series shows a big stone, perfectly cut through by nature. (Again a crack, like in the Gibellina works). The third image is of a fallen human figure, a pillar never finished and therefore looking rough and clumsy.

These photographs are all in a way examples of found, accidental or unintended sculptures. Ready-made sculptures even. But there is also a photograph in the exhibition, *Première Face* from 2006, that shows a ready-made painting. The photograph is of a construction site. The “painting” on the wall is a ready-made indicating the colour scheme that would be used for the building.



Raphaël Zarka, *Changer en île n°1*, 2004. Courtesy galerie Michel Rein, Paris.



Raphaël Zarka, *Changer en île n°3*, 2005. Courtesy galerie Michel Rein, Paris.



Raphaël Zarka, *Première Face*, 2006. Courtesy galerie Michel Rein, Paris.

RAPHAËL ZARKA INTERVIEW BY ELISABETH  
WETTERWALD

July – October 2008

Elisabeth Wetterwald:

You've written two books on skateboarding: *Une journée sans vague. Chronologie lacunaire du skateboard. 1779-2005* (*A Day with no Waves: An Incomplete Chronology of Skateboarding. 1779-2005*) and *La conjonction interdite. Notes sur le skateboard* (*The Forbidden Conjunction: Notes on Skateboarding*). In the preface to *La conjonction interdite*, you write: “For those who skate, skateboarding warps the way you look at things.” As it's something you've spent a lot of time doing, skateboarding has certainly shaped the way you look at things, as well as your approach to sculpture, but we'll come back to that in a moment. Skateboarding doesn't feature in your work as a “fun activity” undertaken by a “fan”. On the contrary, it seems to me that it operates as a tool, a filter and a method; not, at any rate, as a subject, and certainly not an object. I'd like it if you could describe in detail the role that skateboarding plays in your work ...

Raphaël Zarka:

Oddly enough, I'd say that skateboarding enabled me to internalize my passion for certain works of art. I was given my first skateboard when I was seven years old. Like all skaters, I'd seek out smooth surfaces, new tarmac, concrete precincts (which weren't very common in the village I grew up in: there was only one concrete pavement, with two small steps; I knew it by heart). When I was a teenager, skateboarding was my all-

consuming, and pretty much my sole passion. Then, when I went to art school, I consciously set skateboarding to one side.

It was then that I discovered minimalism and conceptual art: I began to familiarize myself with the artists and movements that have had a lasting influence on my work: Arte Povera, with Giuseppe Penone, Giovanni Anselmo and Alighiero e Boetti, British Land Art by Hamish Fulton and Richard Long (or works by David Tremlett and Roger Ackling), as well as Supports / Surfaces (some of Tony Gand's and Daniel Dezeuze's works). When I got to the Ecole des beaux arts in Paris, I was lucky to attend a year-long class devoted Harald Szeemann's exhibition, *When Attitudes become Form*, which was taught by Dider Semin. That moment in art history, which made me completely forget about skateboarding, later helped me to reevaluate my experience as a skater. Because of skateboarding, I was unconsciously aware of some of the forms, materials and logics that had been specific to some of the artists of that generation. So to me my relationship to that period is more of a personal than a historical one.

EW: Could you give precise examples of the kinds of links you've been able to make?

RZ: There's a work by Nancy Holt called *Sun Tunnels* that she made in the Utah desert in 1976. The photographs of that work look very much like photographs of skaters skating giant pipes in the middle of the desert. I'm thinking of the images that Warren Bolster started taking in 1977 in particular (Bolster was a famous surf and skate photographer). Those giant

pipes were to be found in Arizona, especially around Phoenix. In 1973, as part of the Central Arizona Project, Ameron started building concrete pipes in the middle of the desert that sometimes measured up to 7 meters across – part of a project to construct a 500 km long canal. The same pipelines serviced the cooling system of nuclear plants in other parts of the United States. It's likely that Nancy Holt saw them before she conceived of *Sun Tunnels*. In fact, I think that Nancy Holt's fascination for that type of space is of the same order as a skater's; it's just that the artist and the skater use the space in different ways.

I've also always associated Richard Serra's famous *Verb List* (1967-1968) – where the artist lists all the processes one could use to make a work of art (to fold, to throw, to tear, etc...) – with the ways that skaters use their skateboards to test out the materials of a city. Most skateboarding moves get their names from the part of the skateboard that's in contact with a given obstacle and the specific type of friction that causes. So a *nose slide* means making the front part of the skateboard slide along or down a small wall, bench or railing; *nose wheeling* means skating on the front two wheels; a *nose grind* means grinding the front truck. The processes of skateboarding are very like those of so-called process art.

EW: In *Chronologie lacunaire du skateboard*, you mention how Californian skateboarders discovered new terrains. They started off on the pavements, then moved on to the sloping sides of their school playgrounds, which were built into the hills, then empty swimming pools, then giant water pipes; then public spaces, like

the Embarcadero in San Francisco, built at the beginning of the 1970s and containing a fountain made out of intersecting concrete structures...

The discovery and testing out of new spaces is one of the fascinating aspects of skateboarding of that period. And you're right in that it's very close to what some of the artists more or less closely associated with Land Art were doing at the time. A whole dimension of your work seems to be "inhabited" by the memory of Land Art. I'm thinking of your photographs in particular....

RZ: Alongside skateboarding, the other major experience of my teenage years was archeology. A friend of the family owned the grounds of a Château in a small town. I would go there to do amateur digs, and spent a great many weekends digging up catapult balls or uncovering underground pools. As an experience it had a profound effect on me. (In the same way as the time I spent looking for pre-historic tools in a small cave in the Lot region while on a residency at the Ateliers des Arques this year has marked me). And, in fact, the way I came at art was not from the perspective of the imagination or of making, but from that of discovery. I chose to study art with the eventual aim of studying archeology. I've deviated from that path, but something about that relationship to forms has stayed with me. The presence of Land Art in my photographs or videos is not unrelated to the question of archeology. Heizer, Morris, De Maria and Smithson were all interested in the art of the Paleolithic and pre-Columbian civilizations. What I really like about their work is their historicized approach to the formal vocabulary of minimal art.

EW: You often use works by other artists as the basis for your own work. You've come up with your own typology for this way of working: you do “cover versions” and “replicas.” What's the difference?

RZ: My detour via photography got me thinking about how I produce objects as a form of documentary sculpture. Formally, my sculptures are close to the branch of abstraction that leads from constructivism to minimal art. Yet they're not based in a conception of form as an autonomous language. None of the sculptures I've made so far are abstract. But, rather than “figurative”, I prefer to think of them as “documentary”. They deal in objects in particular, they're never just copies. I'm just as interested in the history of the objects they refer to as I am in their form.

Not all the objects we're surrounded by have the same status. Among other characteristics, some of those objects are works of art. This is the kind of distinction that the typology you mention makes. I decided to call works by artists that I've made again “cover versions.” I've actually only made two so far: a wheel made out of breeze-blocks and five circles etched into tarmac: *Reprise n°1 (Iran do Espírito Santo) (Repeat n°1 (Iran do Espírito Santo))*, 2001 and *Reprise n°2 (Michael Heizer) (Repeat n°2 (Michael Heizer))*, 2006. The “replicas” are reconstructions too, but the difference is that they start out from an artisanal object (Galileo's mechanical instruments) or one that's been industrially produced (the breakwaters in *Formes de repos*). I recently added a further category: “reconstructions” in the strict sense, which applies to the production of objects that exist only virtually...

EW: Which is to say...?

RZ: For example, I made *Studiolo* (2008), a wooden model of the cabinet that features in Antonello da Messina's famous painting of Saint Jerome (*San Gerolamo nello studio*, 1475). And I'm working on a piece at the moment that's a reconstruction of the glass rhombicuboctahedron<sup>1</sup> half-filled with water in the portrait of Luca Pacioli by Jacopo de Barbari (*Ritratto di Fra' Luca Pacioli*, 1495). You could say that the *Billes de Sharp* (*Sharp's Beams*) (2008) series belongs to this category too. In that piece, I had a network of straight lines pyro-graved into oak beams. The sculptures repeat the perspective drawings, illustrating a method for the construction of semi-regular polyhedrons invented by the English astronomer Abraham Sharp in 1718, line by line; a method that, as far as I know, has never actually been used.

To complete that typology, there are also “deductions.” *Forme à clef* (2006), a piece I showed as part of the exhibition entitled “XS” (2007) at the Fondation Ricard, is a small geometrical sculpture, a wooden polyhedron deduced from thirty six wedges, used in painting stretchers. This type of deduction is linked to the use of a modular system. It's something that I'm really interested in, especially in other people's work. In another genre, there's *Sculpture déduite* (2007), a circular layering of wood and marble that is the exact counter-form of the replica I did of one of Galileo's objects, which he devised to study the movement of pendulums (*Tautochrone*, 2007).

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<sup>1</sup> In geometry, the rhombicuboctahedron, is an Archimedean solid with eight triangular and eighteen square faces.

Last, there's the found object, the readymade in the surrealist sense of an object that's been promoted to the status of artwork. This is quite a new method for me. The first piece of I made in this category was a ready-made still life, *Les Ptolemaïques (The Ptolemaics)* (2008): a collection of four objects, used in a particular kind of cup and ball game, arranged on a small copper-plated wooden shelf. I recently made a piece in the same genre: *Préfiguration de la collection des rhombis (Prefiguring a collection of rhombis)*. While he was putting up his *Le Jardin de Cyrus* (2007) at the Galerie Edouard Manet in Gennevilliers, Yoan Gourmel found some small metal rhombicuboctahedrons in a cupboard. The rhombicuboctahedrons were pierced and grooved on every side. I simply placed two of those small objects on a copy of Luca Pacioli's *Divine Proportion*<sup>2</sup>, and bookmarked one or two pages.

EW: How are these “methods” different from citation or appropriation?

RZ: Once you've made the decision that you're going to work in a documentary manner, and you want to give a physical account of a particular object, there aren't many means at your disposal other than imitation, duplication or just presenting the object itself. If I've made use of these operatory modes, it's not to treat them as subjects. They constitute a method that's entirely bound up with the project I've set myself: to establish a collection of objects that's at the same time a collection of sculptures. For a “documentary practice”

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<sup>2</sup> Luca Pacioli, *On the Divine Proportion*, treatise first published in Venice in 1509 with illustrations by Leonardo da Vinci.

to be more than just a “collection of various documents”, one *mnemosyne*<sup>3</sup> among others, it has to engage in modes of production / restitution such as the copy, the replica, the reconstruction, or the readymade.

EW: Your way of working is quite close to the artists of the Renaissance (the model of the artist-engineer) who drew on their scientific investigations when working out their paintings or represented that link between art and science in paint. We get the sense that that world, the imagination of the Renaissance, is at least one that you're familiar with...

RZ: What really interests me in the Renaissance is the porosity between different fields of knowledge and techniques. Perspective, that incredible effort of rationalization with a view to representing the world, was as important to mathematicians, doctors, botanists as it was to painters, sculptors, architects.... The spaces built using the stricter rules of perspectives prevalent during the Quattrocento suit my taste for geometrical abstraction. Often, when I look at Giotto, Piero della Francesca, Uccello or Mantegna, I mentally remove all the human figures until I'm left with constructions that look like “ideal cities”: perspectives on deserted cities that historians also sometimes qualify as “urbinate”. These radical constructions (that can be found in an even more abstract form in the geometrical panels in the *Studiolo* from Gubbio or Urbino<sup>4</sup>) in some

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<sup>3</sup> *Mnemosyne* was in the Greek mythology the personification of memory. Zarka refers here to the project of Warburg (not to Mnemosyne as a myth).

<sup>4</sup> The *studiolo* were private chambers used for the purpose of study and meditation. The most famous are those from Gubbio (in

sense prefigure the geometrical sculpture of the twentieth century, and in particular the works that could at one time have been associated with minimal art (from Tony Smith to Robert Morris). It seems to me that that kind of geometrical sculpture is more likely to have come out of painting than the history of sculpture: the paintings of *mazzocchi*<sup>5</sup>, for example, or octagonal wells. In fact, judging by the number of times it has been replicated in contemporary art, Dürer's rhombohedron in *Mélancolie* (1514) is probably the most famous minimal sculpture of the sixteenth century (if not the whole of art history).

I'm aware that I share this interest in the Renaissance with a number of artists. I'm thinking of Isabelle Comaro, for example, of her series of *Black Maria* drawings (2008)<sup>6</sup> that she showed this year at the Ferme du Buisson, and the ones showed more recently at the Galerie Xippas. In her work, there's a clear sense that this recourse to classical perspective serves an alternative to geometrical abstraction. I'd even be tempted to say, reversing the direction of the history of

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Guidobaldo I da Montefeltro's ducal palace, now conserved at the Metropolitan Museum in New York) and Urbino (in Frédéric III da Montefeltro's ducal palace), for their trompe-d'œil panels. They contain representations of polyhedra very similar to the ones by Leonardo da Vinci that figure in Pacioli's treatise.

<sup>5</sup> Frequently painted by Uccello, the *mazzocchio* was originally an article of male clothing that was fashionable during the Quattrocento.

<sup>6</sup> *Black Maria* is a sort of cinematographic study combining eleven drawings on tracing paper with eleven black and white photographs. Abstract images made following a mathematical system from the Renaissance are set alongside photographs that gradually zoom in on a character.

art, that classical perspective is an *extension* of geometrical abstraction.

EW: A number of artists of your generation, with whom you often show your work, work as “connectors”. Your work doesn't partake in the great big postmodern mix-up, nor do you appropriate, quote or remake. Yours is more like a methodological postmodernism. You borrow, you manipulate, you make links, you create networks of knowledge and information, you pick out analogies....

RZ: Yes, that's true in the case of artists such as Julien Prévieux, Aurélien Froment, Jochen Dehn, Gyan Panchal, Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc, Benoit Maire, and Isabelle Cornaro, among others. There's no desire to break with the past. But as a spectator it's impossible not to see that there are some very obvious differences between the exhibition organized by Saâdane Afif and Valérie Chartrain at the last Lyon Biennale<sup>7</sup> and the one by Pierre Joseph that we spoke about earlier – if only on a formal level; or indeed between the two most recent Prix Ricard shows, the one Mathieu Mercier curated in 2007<sup>8</sup> and Nicolas Bourriaud's this year...

If I had to speculate on the relative specificity of these artists, I'd say it has to do with an open and profound

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<sup>7</sup> “Promenade au zoo” an account of the Zoo Galerie (Nantes) and the journal *Zéro-deux*, (both under the direction Patrice Joly), via works by forty-five artists.

<sup>8</sup> “Dérive”, 12 October- 17 November 2007, with the artists Wilfrid Almendra, Vincent Beaurin, Christophe Berdagner & Marie Péjus, Julien Bouillon, Stéphane Calais, Sammy Engramer, Marc Étienne, Daniel Firman, Regine Kolle, Hugues Reip and Virginie Yassef.

connection with history. The fact that Aby Warburg was omnipresent in the intellectual context of our time at art school is probably not just a coincidence. I know how important the book by Philippe-Alain Michaud<sup>9</sup> is to Aurélien Froment, and some of Didi-Huberman's texts to Mathieu K. Abonnenc. But ultimately what mattered was less the topics that Warburg discussed than the methodological implications of his work: the way he expands fields of knowledge, is constantly telescoping different moments from the history of form and gesture; to repeat something that Giorgio Agamben says, he basically “goes beyond the limits of art history itself.”<sup>10</sup>

As a form of investigation and the way different references can intersect, the activity of the art historian, like that of the essayist, is very important to us. And if Warburg's *Mnemosyne* atlas approaches an artwork, it's not surprising that some artists are starting to approach or claim to be engaging in the work of the essayist. This is probably one of the main reasons why Robert Smithson is so widely admired nowadays. Given his fondness for geometry, materials, the landscape, his research carried in books or out in the world, I'm not at all surprised that Smithson gets cited more frequently than Marcel Duchamp. As far as my work is concerned, I find I'm often compelled to talk about the influence of Roger Caillois: his concept of a generalized poetics based on the idea of there being a unity and continuity

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<sup>9</sup> Philippe-Alain Michaud, *Aby Warburg et l'image en mouvement* (Paris: Macula, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> Giorgio Agamben, “Aby Warburg et la science sans nom”, *Image et Mémoire* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, coll. Art & esthétique, 2004), p.11.

between the physical, intellectual and imaginary worlds.<sup>11</sup>

*This interview was first published in the magazine 20/27, n°3, January 2009, éditions M19, Paris. This is a shortened version of the interview.*

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<sup>11</sup> See in particular "Le Champ des signes" and the chapter entitled "Sciences diagonales" in Roger Caillois, *Œuvres* (Paris: Gallimard, coll. Quarto, 2008).

## STROOM SCHOOL

Stroom School is the umbrella term for the side program that Stroom organizes coinciding with exhibitions. In the Stroom School issues are highlighted and deepened in another way than in the exhibitions. The Stroom School activities are free and open to everyone. On [www.stroom.nl](http://www.stroom.nl) the Stroom School activities are described and there is the possibility to sign up.

### AGENDA

#### EVERY SUNDAY FREE GUIDED TOURS

Every Sunday at 3 PM (except on June 12) there are free guided tours through the exhibition by the team of Stroom or an external guide. For this exhibition the external guides are:

19 JUNE 2011, 3PM

Guided tour by artist Jan van de Pavert.

26 JUNE 2011, 3PM

Guided tour by Bas Ackermann, director of Shoot Me Film Festival.

3 JULY 2011, 3PM

Guided tour by Benno Tempel, director of the Gemeentemuseum The Hague.

9 JUNE 2011 – KNIGHT'S MOVE LECTURE BY  
IAIN BORDEN

Iain Borden is a historian, a researcher of architecture and urban culture and the head of Bartlett School of Architecture in London. He is interested in both the design and our actual experience of the built environment. He did research into skateboarding as a way of exploring the city. He is currently working on a history of automobile driving in film as a spatial experience of cities, landscapes and architecture.

The Knight's Move lecture takes place at 8PM.  
Entrance is free; reservation recommended  
([www.stroom.nl](http://www.stroom.nl)).

21 AUGUST 2011, 3PM – FINISSAGE  
Guided tour by Arno van Roosmalen, director of  
Stroom Den Haag and festive closure of the exhibition.

Acknowledgements: Mondriaan Foundation, Galerie Michel Rein, Parijs (F), Le Frac Alsace, Sélestat (F), Le Grand Café, Saint-Nazaire (F), CAN - Centre d'Art Neuchâtel (CH) en Motive Gallery, Amsterdam.

**Stroom**  
**Den Haag**