

Zones de (non)être

A collective exhibition

With artworks from Tania Candiani, Nicolas Daubanes et Louisa Yousfi, Domènec, Armand Gatti, Laila Hida, Adelita Husni-Bey, Laura Molton, Groupe Medvedkine Sochaux, Maeva Totolehibe, Carole Roussopoulos, Erika Roux, María Ruido, Nil Yalter.

27-09-2025 ➔ 04-01-2026



« Each of us shouldered, one by one, uncontrollable weary dreams we fell silent in orphaned solitudes surrendered ourselves so that the world would be a better place. »

Meral Şimşek, "dream and reality"
in *İncir Karası* or *Refugee Dreams*, 2022.

Historically, cities were first built as fortified centers that not only offered protection but also clearly marked internal social divisions. In the French context of the 20th century, this logic of separation was transformed into infrastructure: the périphérique (ring road) is one example. It is a belt initially designed to connect the suburbs to the heart of Paris, but which today acts more as a symbolic border, an invisible but powerful line that isolates populations according to socio-economic, cultural, or geographical criteria. "Today, the suburbs represent the bulk of urbanized territory [...] While the suburbs may have been the seed of this exclusion, they also benefited from it [...], a permissive and economically dynamic place [in] the 19th century [...] a space of conquering modernity¹."

This liminal space not only shapes urban geography, but also shapes subjectivities. It encompasses multiple realities and fantasies and must be understood in the "plural." In contemporary France, the suburbs and outskirts are becoming key places for the affirmation of the "self" for the working classes, particularly among the younger generations of families with a strong history of immigration. These families live in a state of identity suspicion, faced with exclusion from the labor market, low representation in the spheres of political power², and forms of isolation or ghettoization that become an integral part of how they construct and represent themselves. This movement is not limited to France and its industrial history. It concerns the global history of urban planning in Northern countries, which have largely exploited the labor force and resources of Southern countries.

This movement is not limited to cities alone. It concerns a societal system that divides the territory and populations into zones and pits the center against the periphery in power relations. It is therefore worth remembering that the peripheries and suburbs are "places of creation, innovation, and transformation, and they are at the heart of the country's major societal and cultural developments³." The exhibition thus aims, without claiming to be exhaustive, to bring together individual stories and collective history, "where tensions, divisions, and relegations shape and accompany political and artistic struggles⁴."



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1- Xavier Malverti, "Les chantiers d'une modernité" in *Banlieues*, les cahiers de la recherche architecturale 38/39, éditions parenthèses, 1996.

2- Ahmed Haderbache Bernárdez, *Visibilidades, narrativas migratorias, transnacionalidad y género en el arte contemporáneo* (pp. 156-157). in *Libro de actos*. Universitat de València, 2017.

3- Press kit for *Banlieues Chéries* exhibition at the National Museum of Immigration History. Excerpt from "Three questions for Susana Gallego Cuesta, Alféstei, Aka Émilie Garnaud, and Horya Makhlof, curators of the exhibition."

4- *Banlieues Chéries* Op. Cit.



The exhibition *Zones de (non)être* began its reflection on the history of the labor movement, tracing it back to the political struggles of May 1968 in France. These demands not only called for improvements in the workplace, but also laid the groundwork for a broader critique of forms of exclusion and social domination. Throughout the 1970s, these struggles spread and resonated with other historically marginalized groups, such as women, who began to make their subordinate position visible, even within the labor movements themselves. Thus, the horizon of social transformation driven by the working class broadened, incorporating feminist, anti-racist, and anti-colonial demands that challenged not only economic exploitation but also structural inequalities in all areas of life. This process shows how the class struggle must be understood as a starting point for the convergence of other struggles, in order to articulate an emancipatory politics. To quote Angela Davis, a leading figure in anti-racist feminism and the fight for social rights in the United States in the 1960s: “The struggles against racism, sexism, and capitalism are inseparable; the emancipation of the working class must be anti-racist and feminist, or it will not be at all⁵”.

In Montbéliard, urban development, the city center, and the suburbs have been structured with, by, and for industry in modern and contemporary times. It is no coincidence that the exhibition *Zones de (non)être*, though, is being held in a former workshop of the Peugeot automobile company. However, it is rare to have the opportunity to link the history of a place—now transformed into an art center—so directly to the project it hosts.

The exhibition also takes a critical look at areas of exclusion or relegation of minority groups or those made invisible by structures created by patriarchy, capitalism, and colonization. In dialogue with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s question, “Can the subaltern speak?”, *Zones de (non)être* questions the possibility of representing the emancipation of these groups without it being co-opted by hegemonic discourses.

In this 1985 essay, Spivak discusses people outside the dominant system of representation, including migrant women, refugees, and women living in the world’s poorest countries. Spivak warns that even if subordinates can speak, their voices are systematically silenced or interpreted through foreign codes, as if they had never existed⁶, as if they could never escape the “zone of non-being”⁷.

This observation is shared by Stéphane Beaud and Michel Pialoux in the conclusion of their book *Retour sur la condition ouvrière - Enquête aux usines Peugeot de Sochaux-Montbéliard* [Return to the Working Class Condition: Investigation at the Peugeot Factories in Sochaux-Montbéliard], reissued in 2011. They write: “The paradox of the current situation ultimately stems from the fact that the working-class issue is, in reality, more relevant than ever, yet it is obscured, even denied, in the political arena. As the ‘crisis’ has deepened and unemployment has risen, new divisions in society have emerged. This is particularly the case with categorizations in terms of opposition between ‘included’ and ‘excluded’ (or in/out) and between French citizens and immigrants, which have gradually covered up the labor issue and ultimately dissolved it”⁸.

Thus, the works brought together here share a situated sensibility, which sometimes takes the form of ethnographic research, sometimes that of testimony. All of them question, within our contemporary society, who can produce knowledge and who has the right to express themselves, and they allow themselves «to ask the question, which is more relevant than ever, of the legitimacy of the voices of the ‘dominated’, of the need to make their voices heard and to listen to them attentively, of their right to impose their words [...] it also means granting them the right to speak their own language.” This stance is therefore “eminently political insofar as [it] helps to bring about a discourse or social experiences that are usually [...] *a priori* disqualified”⁹.

5—Angela Davis, *Femmes, race et classe*, Éditions des Femmes, 1983.
6—Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the subaltern speak?,” in C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (pp. 66–111). University of Illinois Press, 1988.

7—In 1952, in the introduction to *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon defined the expression “Zone of Non-Being,” which gives the exhibition its title: “There is a zone of non-being, an extraordinarily barren and arid region, an essentially bare ramp, from which an authentic emergence can arise. In most cases, Black people do not have the benefit of making this descent into the true Underworld.” For Fanon, capitalism is not just an economic issue. It is also a racial project. This racism is a hierarchy of superiority and inferiority, situated on the line separating the human from the non-human. Those above this line are socially recognized as possessors living in the realm of being. Below, the non-possessors remain in the realm of non-being.

8—La Découverte éditions. Translation suggested by the authors.

9—This quote and the one before: Stéphane Beaud et Michel Pialoux, *Op. Cit.*, 2011.

In 1973, a few miles from Montbéliard, the LIP watch factory in Besançon, France, became the scene of one of the country's most iconic labor struggles. Faced with the announcement of mass layoffs and imminent closure, the workers occupied the factory and decided to continue production on their own, establishing a model of self-management. Under the slogan "We manufacture, we sell, we cash in," they not only defended their jobs, but also established an alternative form of work and economic organization, making their protest an international symbol of worker resistance and creativity.

Women workers, who made up the majority of the workforce but were relegated to less valued and lower-paid tasks, played a key role in this struggle. They participated in picket lines, assemblies, external communication, and the daily life of the conflict, while denouncing their invisibility within the labor movement itself. Their involvement fostered a feminist awareness that led to the creation of the group "Lip au féminin" [Lip Women], in which they reflected on the double exploitation they suffered: as workers and as women. Their resistance was not only professional but also political, paving the way for a broader critique of gender inequalities within trade unionism and the class struggle.

Christiane et Monique (LIP V) is a documentary made in 1976 by **Carole Roussopoulos**, a pioneer of feminist activist video, which is part of a series devoted to the workers' struggle at the LIP factory. In this fifth chapter, Roussopoulos, equipped with her Sony Portapak, a lightweight and accessible camera, gives voice to Christiane and Monique, two workers who reflect on their experience of the conflict, highlighting the active—and often overlooked—role of women in the workers' resistance. Through their direct, unmediated testimonies, the work reveals how, beyond the struggle for jobs, they challenge gender inequalities both at the factory and at home. The documentary thus becomes a political tool that combines class struggle and feminist consciousness, and which asserts women's voices as an essential part of LIP's collective memory. One of the most striking scenes in the documentary is when Monique suggests replacing the word "women" with "Arabs" in certain union texts and speeches. By doing so, she highlights the discriminatory nature of many statements which, when heard by another marginalized person, prove to be racist, violent, and unacceptable. This play on words serves as a tool for denaturalizing sexism: it shows how structural sexual oppression is, to the point that it often goes unnoticed, even among progressive comrades or activists. It also asserts that patriarchal oppression creates areas of relegation where all minorities are pushed aside. Monique is thus calling for a convergence of the struggles of those who are made invisible.

Roussopoulos was part of a generation of activist filmmakers who, in the 1960s and 1970s, used cinema as a political tool and a means of direct intervention in workers' and social struggles in France. Among them, and in the context of the Bourgogne-Franche-Comté region, it is worth mentioning the figures of Chris Marker and Armand Gatti, who played a leading role in conflicts such as those at Peugeot in Montbéliard and other factories in eastern France, where industrial capital was undergoing profound transformation. Roussopoulos, Gatti, and Marker all challenged, through their films, the very idea of culture as a sphere distinct from productive and rational life, something that the working class constantly denounced, seeing culture as a tool for maintaining hierarchies by systematically excluding part of the population. Their work as artists, filmmakers, and documentary filmmakers also follows on from the observations made on this subject during their era, as exemplified by Bourdieu and Darbel's influential book *L'amour de l'art* [The Love of Art], which also uses sociological research to establish the issues of distinction, domination, center, and periphery. They write: «Statistics reveal that access to cultural works is the privilege of the educated class; but this privilege has all the appearances of legitimacy. In fact, the only people excluded here are those who exclude themselves¹⁰».

Faced with bourgeois individualism, Roussopoulos, Gatti, Marker, and others proposed a model of collective, non-hierarchical militant cinema that eliminated the distinction between experts and amateurs, creators and spectators, in and out.

10-Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel, *L'amour de l'art - les musées d'art européens et leurs publics*, Éditions de Minuit, 1966.



One of the most notable shared production experiences was the creation of the **Medvedkin groups** by Chris Marker in 1967. This was an audiovisual social experiment led by militant filmmakers and technicians in collaboration with workers, which continued for nearly five years in Besançon before expanding to the Peugeot factory in Sochaux-Montbéliard¹¹. *Sochaux, 11 juin 1968* is the first film by the second group, which deals with the 22-day strike and the subsequent police raid on the Peugeot factories in Sochaux, which left two people dead and 150 injured. The film features the workers speaking to the camera, filmed by their colleagues.

Le Lion, sa cage et ses ailes (1975–1977) [The Lion, His Cage and His Wings], 1975–1977 consists of eight short documentaries made between 1975 and 1977 by **Armand Gatti**. The project was born out of a public invitation from the poet: “A film, yours,” addressed to the city’s various working-class communities, with the idea that the workers themselves would construct their own audiovisual history, in radical contrast to traditional modes of representation. Each episode focuses on a different community: Poles, Moroccans, Spaniards, Georgians, Yugoslavs, Italians, etc.

Documenting the migratory and professional experience from the perspective of the workers themselves may, at first glance, seem like an act of fidelity to reality. However, as many image theorists have pointed out, any technical and aesthetic mediation is inevitably imbued with subjectivity. According to Susan Sontag, for example, “the camera is not an instrument of objectivity, but an extension of the photographer’s consciousness¹²”. As such, Gatti’s work, among others, in the editing of his films, includes subjective omissions for the purposes of poetic storytelling. Thus, the frequent omission of women in his narrative offers an incomplete account of the migrant experience or the working-class condition at the time.

In the 1980s, other political and activist movements emerged and took over from previous artistic proposals. Film production captured the spirit of the times, which was characterized by the gradual disappearance of the working-class narrative from the political sphere. This was gradually replaced, following urban riots, by the notion of “urban policy,” which no longer focused on social classes but rather on an urban planning approach, that of the suburbs and outskirts of large cities, now described as ‘sensitive’ and “priority” areas. In line with this, a new type of film emerged in relation to this specific context, some of which attempted to offer a less stereotypical view of these contexts. This genre has influenced the works of Doménec and Erika Roux presented in the exhibition. *Conversation Piece: Les Minguettes* (2017) and *Aujourd’hui, on est là* [Today, we are here] (2021) are films that champion the outskirts of cities. In line with suburban cinema, they address social problems, the indifference of the political class, the contempt of the rest of society, delinquency, racism, and latent violence¹³. The works of Doménec and Roux show how these spaces are treated as “lawless zones” by the state, where police repression and job insecurity overlap¹⁴, but they also view these contexts as

spaces of resistance and creativity that can contribute to the development of an alternative society.

Doménec explores the history of Les Minguettes, a utopian housing project that became a working-class neighborhood and a symbol of suburban unrest in France, located in Vénissieux, a town on the outskirts of Lyon. He chooses to approach this context from the perspective of local resistance rather than as an urban failure, highlighting the social struggles against institutional racism since the 1980s. His work denounces the way in which, after these mobilizations, a “return to order” was imposed, leading to the demolition of social housing buildings, used as a metaphor for power to show who decides which spaces should disappear. From the point of view of the residents themselves, Doménec questions the dominant urban planning discourse: what failure does this demolition really represent? The utopia of modern urban planning or the authoritarian imposition of the state plan? His work rethinks these questions from the perspective of the residents themselves, revealing a symbolic and material oppression that persists even after the physical collapse of the structures¹⁵.

Erika Roux’s work *Aujourd’hui, on est là* (2021) documents the work of the collective *La Révolution est en marche* (LREEM), a grassroots movement that originated in Aulnay-sous-Bois, a suburb of Paris where the artist grew up. In a relationship of trust and support, Roux follows the collective during demonstrations, meetings, and political actions, capturing both its public interventions and intimate moments of reflection in private spaces. The work shows how LREEM uses tools such as cell phones to make injustices visible and build a new political imagination from marginalized communities. It focuses in particular on the campaign to collect signatures from 500 mayors in order to present co-founder Hadama Traoré as a candidate in the 2022 presidential election, reflecting a collective struggle for representation and social justice. As a former resident of the neighborhood, Roux’s approach oscillates between narrative and documentary in order to reveal the state of affairs, discourses, attitudes, and actions at work. She seeks to convey these usually invisible energies to viewers without offering critical commentary¹⁶.

11-Trevor Stark, « Cinema in the hands of the people » in Chris Marker, *the Medvedkin Group, and the potential of militant film*. October, 2015.

12-Suzanne Sontag, *On Photography*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977, p.6.

13-Matteo Re & Léna Georgault, *La banlieue y el proceso de radicalización colectiva en Francia: Análisis de las películas La Haine y Les Misérables* in *Aruacaria. Revista Iberoamericana de Filosofía, Política, Humanidades y Relaciones Internacionales*, 24(50), 309–331, 2022.

14-Louisa Yousfi, *Rester barbare, La Fabrique*, éditions, 2022.

15-Doménec, *Conversation Piece: Les Minguettes*, 2017.

16-Erika Roux, *Aujourd’hui, on est là*, 2021.

This closeness to the voices that are expressed is one of the keys to most of the works in the exhibition and to this method described as ethnographic. The artist **María Ruido**, for example, is also heir to this tradition, which uses cinema as a tool for political and social criticism. The tradition of militant and self-reflective cinema is used as a tool in one of her early films: *La memoria interior* [The intern Memory] (2002), in which she draws on her own experience: the trauma of emigration. A trauma that is often misunderstood and unshared, but which persists in subsequent generations.

The artist's parents talk about their past in Germany. They arrived there among the half a million Spanish workers "exported" by the Franco regime, which, between 1960 and 1973, sent workers to West Germany in controlled contingents in order to combat unemployment and secure a source of income. María Ruido searches the factories where they worked for traces of this history. Her stories generate a counter-memory that confronts intimate experience with documentary archives. Her work reveals the paradox of these migrant bodies: indispensable as labor, but erased as political subjects. In this dialogue between family memory and artistic research, Ruido exposes the wounds of a biopolitics that has made emigration an instrument of the state¹⁷.

Domènec, Roux and Ruido are part of a lineage of artists who view audiovisual essays as a form of critical and emancipatory thinking, pointing out in particular that racism, as Foucault would say, "is not simply an ideology, but a technology of power, a mode of administering life and death through exclusion"¹⁸.

Foucault describes these executions, hidden behind secret walls, in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*¹⁹, an essay that studies the historical emergence of the prison in its modern form. According to him, the prison is one of the revolutions through which power now addresses citizens. It is the most notable product of the state's disciplinary spaces (Foucault also includes hospitals and schools, among others), whose purpose is to render part of the population invisible. The statistics, moreover, still speak for themselves today. They echo the voices we have already mentioned, with the exception of gender, as women remain a minority in prison. In other words, French prisons are populated by "A very large majority of men, relatively young, poor, with family ties that are more often strained than in the rest of the population, from modest backgrounds and frequently unemployed or in prison at the time of incarceration, with below-average levels of education: they are mainly French nationals, but the proportion of foreigners is significant, and even more so the over-representation of defendants from immigrant backgrounds"²⁰.

17-María Ruido, *Work & Words*, 2015. [La memoria interior].

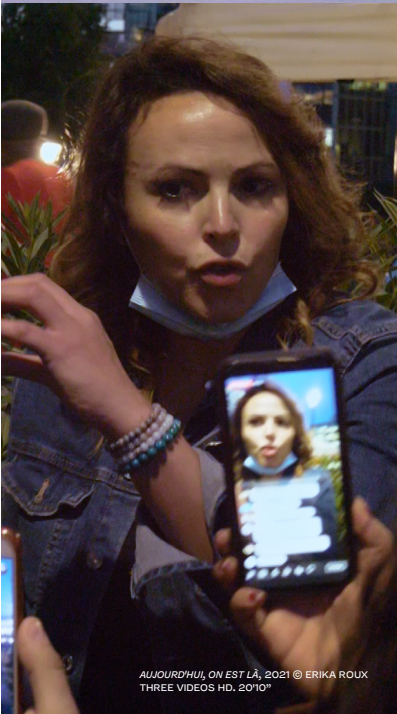
18-Michel Foucault, *We must defend the company* 1976.

19-Pantheon Books, 1977 for english version.

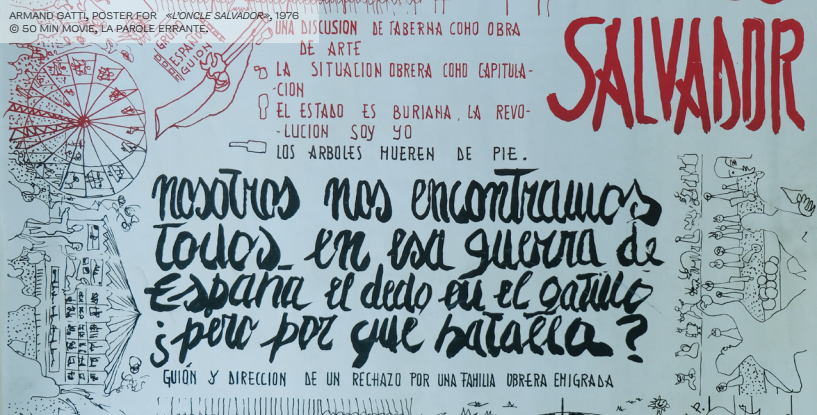
20-Philippe Combes, *Sociologie de la prison*, collection Repères, Éditions La découverte, 2009.



LA MEMORIA INTERIOR, 2002
© MARÍA RUIDO



AUJOURD'HUI, ON EST LÀ, 2021 © ERIKA ROUX
THREE VIDEOS HD. 20'10"



So, on the other side of the prison door, are we entering a zone of non-being or a necessary new space of resistance? *The Talk* by Nicolas Daubanes and Louisa Youssi is an old door from the Baumettes prison in Marseille. The prison was built between 1933 and 1939. It was recently expanded because the original building was not only dilapidated but also overcrowded. On the cell side of the door (i.e., the side invisible to guards when the door is open), there is a text engraved with a drypoint. It is a transcription of the words of a Palestinian father, Nawaf Al Salayme, to his 14-year-old son, Ayam, a few minutes before his incarceration in an Israeli prison in West Jerusalem. These sentences are reminiscent of the recommendations in a survival manual. They emphasize that imprisonment cannot put an end to resistance, but that it opens the way to a new form of resistance. It refers to a political stance. According to Foucault, the analysis of resistance in prison and how it exists is an integral part of power relations. Resistance is even what it is therefore one of the methods used to maintain the visibility of the voices of subordinates. All research on prison environments points to a fundamental observation: “Criminal justice policies and the extent to which prisons are used are directly dependent on other social policies that are implemented²²”. In other words, forms of political resistance and prison revolts are directly correlated with the absence of social policy and/or colonial issues in specific territories and populations.

This same technology of power is the subject of several works by artist Adelita Husni-Bey, who acts as both an artist and a researcher or educator in her projects. These projects require long periods of immersion with collectives in

order to understand their underlying structures and view them as spaces of resistance and micropolitical²³ alternatives.

Chiron takes its title from the Greek mythological figure of the same name, a centaur with manual skills that enable him to heal. The installation was created in collaboration with members of UnLocal, a non-profit organization that provides free legal representation to undocumented immigrants in New York City. The video and banners document several group sessions in which the artist asked the lawyers to perform a number of experimental exercises inspired by Brazilian director Augusto Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed²⁴. In keeping with Boal’s work, Husni-Bey suggests collective therapeutic spaces to de-individualize pain and understand its political ramifications, as well as to find collective solutions together. Through the images from these workshops, Chiron suggests that the pain and trauma of the immigration process not only affect undocumented immigrants, but cause suffering throughout the country and beyond its borders. Finally, the collection directly addresses the human and social consequences of imperialist enterprises.

21-« Michel Foucault, an Interview : Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity » with B. Gallagher et A. Wilson, Toronto, juin 1982 for the magazine Body Politic.

22-Charlotte Vanneste, « Pauvreté, précarité et prison : des liens de proximité inéluctables ? » in *Spécificités*, 2014, 6(1), 202-220.

23-The concept of “micropolitics” has the power to infiltrate all areas of society through its ability to provoke reactions and adjustments in the global sphere. In a way, the “micro-actions” advocated by the witnesses in the film, among others, can be seen as attempts to provoke these effects. See Félix Guattari and Suely Rolnik, *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*, Semiotext(e), 2007.

24-The Theater of the Oppressed describes a set of theatrical forms developed by Brazilian practitioner Augusto Boal beginning in the 1970s, first in Brazil and then in Europe. Boal was influenced by the work of educator and theorist Paulo Freire and his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. The main objective of Boal’s techniques is to use theater as a means of emancipation and social and political change. Forum theater, in particular, operates on the principle of interactive theatrical performance in which the audience is invited to participate in order to explore, show, analyze, and transform the reality in which they live as “spect-actors.”

The latter are also responsible for the alienation of bodies, a condition shared between extreme situations of migration and the economic livelihoods found by the poor, who are often forced to live with little comfort and accept jobs that combine low autonomy, physical hardship, and high precariousness. Carried out over a period of two years and following several visits to Cincinnati (United States), **Tania Candiani's** project *Sounding Labor, Silent Bodies* has resulted in a body of work that examines the contradictions of the rhetoric of progress in North America's industrial history. This research, applicable to all countries that have undergone an "industrial revolution," is mediated by the body in Candiani's work. Drawing on repetitive movement, omnipresent sounds, and the scenography of workspaces that impose specific circulation patterns, Candiani emphasizes the expressive potential of factory workers' bodies, which she describes as performing a "choreography of labor"²⁵.

Among this collection, *Four Industries* is a film in which an all-female choir recites sounds associated with Cincinnati's main industries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries: foundries, meat processing, printing, and woodworking. In a historic brewery in Over-the-Rhine, the resulting *a cappella* choir is rhythmic and repetitive, reminiscent of pouring, hammering, or cutting, gestures associated with manufacturing products. By using the human voice to imitate mechanized sounds, Candiani reminds us of the physical impact of labor and the bodies that were necessary to support the transformation of raw materials. The film further demonstrates the mechanization imposed on workers through the movement of the camera, which reflects the trajectories of the machines. Finally, it also reintroduces into the collective imagination the place of women who, in dominant historical narratives, have been excluded from their role as factory workers²⁶. Here, the political space of the voice is affirmed and the possibility of reclaiming this history by embodying it through singing is created.

Husni Bey and Candiani thus embrace new practices defined under the term "performative film," which allow many artists today to deliver different elements related to their own experience in connection with research that often involves third parties. "Situated between several mediums (lecture, film, theater, performance), performative film unfolds before the eyes of the audience by exposing the entire production chain, from simple intuition to its plastic crystallization, returning the artist to the role of producer"²⁷.

This performative dimension, combined with installation, is also one of the methods used

by artist Maeva Totolehibe to bear witness to her personal experience. She creates «installations-narratives based on gaps, tiny, almost invisible lives, because [as seen in Candiani's work] it is in the void that voices echo. Her imaginary worlds function as tools for political and intimate transformation"²⁸». Her works deal with her own journey, divided between her immigrant Malagasy family and her living environment, the Landes forest, to which she is not allowed to belong. Attempts at appropriation then pass through the body, as with the strands of hair in *Les fantômes ont soif* [The Ghosts are thirsty]. The artist's collection of her own hair refers to the Madagascan rite of passage of Sangory, the aim of which is to separate oneself from a previous state by mixing cut hair with the ocean or river. In perpetual search of this water, the strands of hair are activated in the exhibition space, recalling the discomfort of a situation that seems to perpetuate a transitional state, even though one belongs to the land where one lives and works. This "in-between" state is also the subject of *dans un paysage qui ne me compte pas* [a landscape that does not include me], evoking the gemmer's clog, a peasant and rural symbol of the history of the territory where Totolehibe lives with her family, without having access to it, despite having been installed for more than two generations. To reclaim it, she engraves elements that marked her childhood: the symbol of the "Saturday trilogy" on television, the logo of the "CAF" [Family Allowance Fund] and the map of Madagascar.

As she explains in her book *Solastalgie, ce qui disparaît* [Solastalgia, What Disappears], the periphery then becomes the bare minimum of territory by which to define one's belonging: "We are not the children of the country, we are the children of the neighborhood," she writes.

Totolehibe's works, like those of Husni-Bey, remind us that the paths of immigration do not always lead to finding a new home, nor even to greater freedom.

25-Here, we recall Chaplin's body in *Modern Times* (1936 film) traveling through the gears as the choreography accelerates at the boss's request, thus breaking the usual rhythm to which he was accustomed.
26-Tania Candiani, *Sounding Labor, Silent Bodies*.
27-Erik Bullot, *Du film performatif, Le répertoire des artistes* it: éditions, 2018.
28-Maeva Totolehibe, presentation of the work on www.seizemille.com.

Exile is a Hard Job is an ongoing project that began in 1975. Born in Cairo, **Nil Yalter** has spent most of her life between Turkey and Paris. Drawing on her personal experience, she has produced an important body of work on issues of minority identity. The subject of exile runs through most of her work. She often approaches it from the perspective of the living conditions of exiled families, particularly women. In 1983, Yalter held a solo exhibition at the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris, focusing on video installations featuring documentary interviews with Turkish migrant seamstresses working in ready-to-wear workshops on Rue du Faubourg-Saint-Denis. As an introduction to the exhibition, the artist put up posters throughout the city, on which she painted the title of the exhibition, "Exile is a hard job" in red. The posters are photos and drawings related to a family of workers that the artist met in 1976 for the work *Turkish Immigrants*. The painted phase is a quotation from the last verses of Nâzım Hikmet's poem *Sofya'dan*²⁹ (1957). The artist's use of public space thus brings these words out of the private sphere, making an often hidden everyday reality visible to all. It also offers the opportunity to consider the notion of exile more broadly, not as a transitional situation, but as a state that transforms, evolves, and persists for diasporas and different generations.

The imaginaries constructed by colonial travel narratives or contemporary tourism deliberately ignore the voices of exiles or subalterns in favor of a romanticization of certain geographical contexts. **Laila Hida's** long-term research project, *Le voyage du Phoenix* [The Journey of the Phoenix], the representation of the oasis and its mythification in the visual arts and literature in the 19th century, then in cinema in the 20th century, in order to show how these productions have generated significant financial exploitation to the detriment of the tree and the populations (Moroccans in particular in the case of the artist's research), in addition to promoting the reproduction of stereotypical visions of a replicated and aestheticized territory³⁰.

Indeed, at the end of the 19th century, the *Phoenix dactylifera* date palm, native to North Africa, was transplanted to the French Riviera and then exported to California in the early 20th century. Acclimatized and massively reproduced,



it is at the heart of speculative landscaping and urban ornamentation. Its transplants became so numerous and systematic that the presence of the palm tree eventually became synonymous with the identity of these new territories. This narrative about oases idealized for their mystery and beauty contrasts sharply with current migratory tensions, as people from these regions are rejected, criminalized, or dehumanized at Europe's borders. The aesthetic and cultural aspects of "the other" are celebrated, while their physical and political presence is rendered invisible. This colonial continuity in the way the West consumes "the other" thus permeates even our view of the landscape.

29-Nâzım Hikmet (1901-1963) was a Turkish writer who spent many years in exile in Russia. In an article by Simon Wu in *Opinion for FRIEZE Magazine* on April 8, 2024, the author mentions that he asked a friend for clarification of the Turkish to English translation in Nâzım Hikmet's original text: « Ekin tells me that, in the original Turkish, Gurbetlik or zanaat, Gurbetlik doesn't exactly translate to 'exile', but something like 'living in a country that is not your own, not entirely by force and not entirely of your choosing'. It is most often used to refer to the kind of migrant workers with whom Yalter was intimately familiar. »

30-Laila Hida, « Le voyage du Phoenix » in dossier de presse de l'exposition *Paysages Mouvants au Jeu de Paume*.



CHIRON, 2017 © ADELITA HUSNI-BEY - STILLS

This exploitation of the land to defend the logic of a capitalist economy, imperialist interests, and “since it is everywhere man who exploits man, in the name of power and profit, which leads him to destroy nature^{31*}”, is approached in a completely different way by **Laura Molton’s** *Remonter les rivières* [Going Upstream]. In the undergrowth of La Hague in Normandy, a woman opens the lid of a well. Whispers rise from the bottom of the cavity. Further away, on the banks of a shady stream, a local resident leans over. He too listens, and the memory of the forest seems to pass through him. The residents’ memories come flooding back: they played in streams contaminated by the presence of nuclear power on the Hague moors³².

The residents’ words thus reconstruct a memory that is both personal and political. By collecting their testimonies, Molton reinterprets and gives new meaning to the past, establishing a dialogue between individual stories and the collective memory of the anti-nuclear struggle. Her work shows how art can reopen unresolved debates, particularly in a present marked by the energy crisis, which is reactivating old controversies. Indeed, the installation of this reprocessing plant reflects the state’s desire to arm and equip France with nuclear power at the end of the Second World War. The La Hague site was commissioned in 1966 to extract plutonium from spent fuel. For nearly 60 years, the reprocessing center has been receiving radioactive waste from several European countries and Japan. The northern Cotentin region, known as the Green Desert, was chosen because of its exceptional geological conditions, protected from earthquakes and windswept, but also because it is sparsely populated and somewhat isolated from the rest of the country³³. In these small rural communities, as during the industrial revolution, new jobs are created, replacing work on the land and offering a semblance of modernity, while the extremely polluting factory gradually and silently poisons the water, soil, and air. The film recounts various expressions of resistance since 1966 and helps to free speech, empower bodies, and raise the question of care in a contaminated and abandoned area. It also attempts to offer perspectives on the expression of this memory in the present.

Laila Hida and Laura Molton’s long-term projects combine different media and practices, drawing on historical and sociological research, visual arts, and documentary filmmaking. The

experience of landscape and mobilization based on place constitute a possible response to the desire to make visible, to “make [their] voice and the territory heard, [to] create a kind of sensitive listening network, a tool for better hearing [...] a device for capturing the stories and sounds of a place^{34*}”.

Through the subjects they address and the way they do so, they also offer a perspective on contemporary artistic gestures that remind us that “the essence of politics is the manifestation of dissent, as the presence of two worlds in one^{35*}”.

It is thus the issues of memory today that bring the two worlds together, but also all of the works and practices in the exhibition. Personal experiences can once again be embodied, transmitted, shared, and then felt by those who receive them. However, these phenomena of translation must remain conscious of the political difficulties they entail so as not to fuel a tendency toward “pedagogical and disciplinary appropriation^{36*}” but rather to reveal how transposing speech into another form must “highlight the non-convergence of discourses, so that we can see, through the very ruptures in the narrative, the violence that underpins an episteme^{37*}”.

The exhibition *Zones de (non)être* deliberately raises more questions than it answers: what continuities exist between the labor struggles of the past and current forms of social and professional precariousness? How does the discourse on progress conceal the structural tensions that continue to reproduce inequalities and forms of alienation? What role(s) do collective resistance and mutualist dynamics play today in the face of an increasingly dematerialized and globalized capitalism? What continuity(ies) exist between the colonial gaze and the current management of life (and death) at our borders? How can the activation of memories in the present encourage us to converge our personal struggles toward a collective revolution?

Violeta Janeiro Alfageme & Adeline Lépine Curators of the exhibition

31-Françoise d’Eaubonne, « La nature de la crise » in *La nature assassinée*, revue Sorcières : Les femmes vivent n°20, 1980.Pp. 66-71. Translation suggested by the authors.

32-Laura Molton, *remonter les rivières*.

Artist’s portfolio: www.ddaoccitanie.org.

33-In 1961, Xavière Gauthier published *La Hague, ma terre violente* [La Hague, My Violated Land], the first French book to address the nuclear issue from a feminist perspective. The text combines elements of fiction, memories of the author’s childhood in La Hague, and excerpts from scientific reports related to the installation of the reprocessing plant. She mentions in particular the French government’s choice of site and hypothesizes that the low population density in the event of an accident was a decisive factor. (See p. 102 of the reissue in *Retour à la Hague – Féminisme et nucléaire*, by Xavière Gauthier, Sophie Houdart, and Isabelle Cambourakis, published by Cambourakis, Sorcières collection, April 2022).

34-Intervention of Isabelle Cambourakis from the 17th of January 2021 in the emails entitled « Tressages (2021) » in *Retour à la Hague – Féminisme et nucléaire*. Op. Cit.

35-Jacques Rancière, « Dix thèses sur la politique » in *Aux bords du politique*, Éditions La Fabrique, 1998. Translation is suggested by the authors.

36-Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, « In Other Words », in *Essays in Cultural Politics*. New York: Routledge, 1988.

37-Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, Slavoj Žižek Philippe Sabot (trad.), *Après l’émancipation : Trois voix pour penser la gauche*, Paris Seuil, 2027.

The exhibition Zones de (non)être is produced in collaboration with the collections of the Musée du Temps, the Centre Audiovisuel Simone de Beauvoir, Iskra, La parole errante, the Trussardi collection, and 49 Nord 6 Est Frac Lorraine.

Its organization has been made possible by the support of the Villa Médicis for the work of Nicolas Daubanes and Louisa Yousfi, and the Jeu de Paume for the work of Laila Hida. This project has been made possible thanks to the support of Acción Cultural Española (AC/E) for Violeta Janeiro Alfageme and Domènec.

The curators would particularly like to thank Alexandra and Geronimo Roussopoulos and Jean Hocquard.

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