

PRESS RELEASE

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Dear Barton Byg,

Our mutual friend, Sally Shafto, recently told me about you and your book "Landscape of Resistance: The German Films of Danièle Huillet and Jean-Marie Straub," so I wanted to take this opportunity to write to you and introduce myself as well as let you know about my soon to open art gallery in New York's Lower East Side.

I was personally introduced to the work of Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet by Thom Andersen, one of my teachers when I was a film student at Calarts close to fifteen years ago, so I was particularly glad to find out that you know Thom, an excellent man indeed. Since that time, I have had the luck - and the privilege - to see almost all of Straub/Huillet's films, mostly in Paris. And I should say that it seems that not a day goes by without thinking about them in some way. When I decided to open a gallery, it felt appropriate and almost necessary to try to do something with Straub/Huillet's exemplary work, that is first and foremost show their films to the best of my ability, sporadically, repeatedly, sometimes in careful combination with the work of other artists, in brief, to attempt to give them a life in New York outside of the usual festival, museum or retrospective environment.

As you might be aware, there is an emerging gallery scene in the Lower East Side / Chinatown, and a small group of artists, critics, curators and friends, who are beginning to operate and show their work in the area, are already very interested in the films of Straub/Huillet (perhaps partly because of my somewhat obstinate return to their films in conversations!) My point is that offering this keen public an opportunity to actually see, study and discuss some of these films over an extended period of time will be beneficial to all.

As Sally must have mentioned to you, the inaugural show/event I am planning for the gallery in mid-March consists of screening in tandem "The Death of Empedocles" and "Cézanne" in a series of 3 two-evening events over a period of 3 weeks. In addition to seeing the films, each member of the audience will receive an English translation of "Straub, Hölderlin, Cézanne," Dominique Païni's formidable essay on this film diptych. As you might remember, Païni is also the producer of "Noir Pêché," which I was thinking of showing at first, but decided against since I was informed that no English subtitled version of either "Cézanne" or "Noir Pêché" was in circulation.

In conjunction with the films and the text, I have invited Blake Rayne to contribute a series of paintings to the show. He seems prepared to take on the challenge of distant confrontation with the masters, my own claim being that his work is best apprehended when traced back to Cézanne, and that within the separate realm of the still image of painting, he increasingly shares some of Straub/Huillet's formal concerns. In short, I look at this proposed show as a staging of distinctive exchanges and exercises in admiration in different mediums, which in turn have produced some of the most potent and mutually reinforcing cultural objects I know. As it were, the exhibition covers 2500 years of Western history, and, arguably, is traversed by one idea, an unswerving commitment to a singular ethic of the image.

In light of the above, I wanted to invite you to New York to introduce "The Death of Empedocles" on the night of the first screening of the film. It goes without saying that your participation and presence among us would be greatly appreciated.

I shall take the liberty of calling you in the next few days to discuss this project further.

With best regards,

Miguel Abreu

Blake Rayne's series of paintings is dedicated to Julia Butterfly Hill, in recognition of her victory in saving Luna, the 2000 year old Redwood tree in Northern California, from its cutting by the logging industry.

In 2005, Rayne had solo exhibitions at Reena Spaulings Fine Art, New York and Kevin Bruk Gallery, Miami. He teaches painting at Columbia University.

Special thanks to John Gianvito for providing the English transcript of "Cézanne," to Daniel Stedman for the projectors, to Moira Tierney for projecting the films, to Linda Duchin of New Yorker films, to Joyce Kim, to Stewart Cauley, to Jimmy Raskin, and to John McLaughlin for everything else.