



Catalogue-Texts: Noëlle Chabert (Paris), Suzy Landau (Martinique), Jean-Hubert Martin (Düsseldorf) et Raoul Marek (Paris, Berlin). 32 pages, Edition Paris-Musées Paris

With new works, big size photomontages, in situ and video installations, Raoul Marek, a Swiss artist living between Paris and Berlin, works at the Zadkine museum on a reflexion on "elsewhere", and in a wider meaning on personal and artistic exile, on geographical and mental displacement. What a perception can we get from a foreign world which appears to be simultaneously known and unknown? What are the relations between our own cultural and artistic perception and the foreign culture? Between a superficial seduction of exotism and a deeper understanding? Raoul Marek occupies the Zadkine museum by reappropriating what had originally been a site of artistic production, the former studio of an émigré sculptor. By doing so, he found an anchorage which lent itself perfectly to his own questioning of "elsewhere", and to the notion of displacement which is an integral part of the creating process. Reawakened, the question of exile can arise anew, by opening up to other cultures - for example, that of the Caribbean, present through the photomontages that the artist did last year in Cuba and the Martinique.

Each of Raoul Marek works and public installations (for example at Château Oiron, La salle du monde, or at the Art Contemporary Biennial of Lyon, in 2000, is an open proposal, a process which is ever evolving "on the ground of observations and meetings made on the very place" wrote Stéphane Carrayrou, also pointing out "the method of dialog" so called by the artist.



La salle privée - Exil, Paris

Dinner "Germany" in Paris

La salle privée: Beside the exhibition, Raoul Marek presents to the public a series of events occurring either at the museum either in its neighbourhood (studies center, cinema, restaurant, bookshop). Meetings will be placed under the sign of crossings of individuals, cultures and knowledges.

*La salle privée - Exil au Musée Zadkine
 "plates tchèques / plates suisses"*

L'opération **Nuit Blanche 2002** a connu au musée un très vif succès : 2000 visiteurs ont été comptabilisés. L'artiste Raoul Marek, dans le cadre de l'exposition Exil où l'hospitalité était de mise, a pu proposer au public la dégustation de plus de 300 assiettes tchèques et suisses qu'il a cuisinées, tout au long de la nuit, dans l'atelier, au sein même de ses œuvres, créant ainsi un événement d'une très grande convivialité. Les visiteurs dont beaucoup découvraient le musée ont, malgré les files d'attente parfois longues, manifesté leur enthousiasme.



La salle privée - Exil, Nuit Blanche Paris

"plates tchèques / plates suisses" at the Museum

Text by Noëlle Chabert
On the Art of Moving Around

To Sandya, Julia, Flavien and Elliott, born in Saint-Pierre and Saint-Denis de la Réunion

"The philosophy of wandering unblocks the imagination, it casts us outside this prison-like cave in which we had locked ourselves, the stow-hold of so-called oneness. We are greater than that, with all the world's grandeur!... Because this exploding sea, the Caribbean, and all the world's islands are Creole, which is to say, unforeseeable. Like all the continents, whose coasts are beyond calculation."

Édouard Glissant, *Tout-monde*¹

In 1909, Ossip Zadkine was nineteen years old. He left his native Russia to move to Paris and become an artist. He would never go back, but all his life he maintained certain habits inherited from his native culture, like the ritual of the steaming samovar at home, on the studio stove, as a sign of hospitality. This memory makes a strange return in Raoul Marek's work, bound up as it is with the observation of the ritualized exchanges surrounding food, as they vary with the different cultures at the scale of the planet. *The World Room* project² which seeks to bring these exchanges together in a network, takes place this time in the Zadkine museum and is renewed though a more personal inquiry into the notion of personal and artistic exile.

Anchorage

Raoul Marek, of Swiss nationality and Czech origin through his father, was born in Canada in 1953. Working around the world and living between Paris and Berlin, he belongs to a generation of new migrants – those who "reside in movement," to borrow a phrase from the anthropologist James Clifford. An initial comparison between the foreign artists who just "stopped over" in the French capital and those who were part of the School of Paris, like Zadkine, was already made by the Museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris with exhibitions devoted to each of these two trends, presented almost simultaneously in the year 2000.³ But the feeling of exile and the way it still exists in contemporary artistic practices were not really explored through the two presentations. We think that this "feeling," in its most fertile aspect, will gain something from being considered in the very unfolding of an artistic process. This is precisely the case with the project of Raoul Marek, who works as an artist, immediately situating his act on a symbolic plane, but using concrete means and resources. He occupied the Zadkine museum by reappropriating what had originally been a site of artistic production, the former studio of an émigré sculptor. By doing so, he found an anchorage which lent itself perfectly to his own questioning of "elsewhere." Reawakened, the question of exile can arise anew, by opening up to other cultures – for example, that of the Caribbean, present through the photomontages that the artist did last year in Cuba and Martinique. Far removed from any exoticism, they are actually false mirrors where our spatiotemporal reasoning founders. A way of reacting to the superficial touristic appropriation of the contemporary world, rendered banal by snapshot photography, a way of bringing the image back into the depth of time.

Exiles

With the number of refugees in the world constantly on the rise⁴ the question of exile remains fundamental and painfully timely. But exile cannot be reduced to the terrible trial of uprooting, whereby an individual can lose all his benchmarks and become totally disoriented. In addition to forced or suffered exile, there are voluntary exiles, artistic amongst others. Rilke's "elsewhere propitious for creation." Even more, there is a liberating force within exile itself. For those who have access to this dimension and who know how to use it, without remaining stuck to their origin and to a shore forever lost, the situation of exile is not far removed from the artistic experience. "The artist, he who is obliged to reinvent his origin in order to make an original work," as the novelist David Homel puts it.⁵ But how does it happen that, as psychoanalysis teaches, "you love your origin enough to be able to leave it?"⁶ What are the workings of the transmutation that links memory and oblivion, as an opening to the imaginary? Our roots reach out in front of us. "Our roots are really routes, and our identities, our cultural productions, arise from exchanges, from travels and paths taken," as James Clifford explains to Yves Michaud in an interview entitled "On Travel, Culture and Identity."⁷ Zadkine's testimony, shortly after his arrival in Paris, as related in his book of memories *Le Maillet et le ciseau*, bears similar witness: "My sculptures were visible because they jarred against all the others: they spoke their primal language."⁸

Hybridities

Today's world is characterized by a cosmopolitanism that primarily involves the recognition of the other – the foreigner to us, or in us. Under various forms which are never defined in advance, Raoul Marek's interventions are always open proposals that evolve with others' contributions and participation. Making "geographic and mental mobility into a personal artistic practice," he creates situations that modify the relations between people and perturb their social habits. Changing the givens, he invites us to leave our frameworks, to be a little different from what we are. At a time when cultural differences are being asserted between the members of the same society, leading to problems in society's own self-recognition, this encouragement to mobility is both welcome and necessary. Taking support from his own "identity gap," the artist, as Marie-José Mondzain suggests, is one whose vocation is to "change the world by testifying to its incessant shifts."⁹ Like indivisible being or frozen identity, air-tight cultures simply do not exist. Raoul Marek's hybrid works, closely tied to the "expression of life," involve cultural contexts which are in every sense mixed, because of the contacts, borrowings and exchanges between individuals.

Noëlle Réveillaud-Chabert, born in Casablanca

1. *Tout-monde*, Paris, Gallimard, 1993.

2. "La Salle du monde – La Salle à manger d'Oiron," at the Château d'Oiron, 1992-1993.

3. "L'École de Paris 1904-1929, la part de l'Autre," Museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris, November 30, 2000-March 11, 2001; «Paris pour escape», ARC, Museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris, December 7, 2000-February 18, 2001.

4. In 1989 there were some fifteen million refugees and displaced persons in the world, and twenty-two million in 2000, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

5. David Homel, Jewish-American novelist, adoptive Quebecer, in: *L'Archipel identitaire*, by Marcos Ancelovici and Francis Dupuis-Déri, Montréal, Éditions du Boréal, 1997.

6. Daniel Sibony, excerpt from the article "Tous malades de l'exil", published in *Liberation*, 1997, and *Le Racisme ou La Haine identitaire*, Paris, Bourgois, 1997.

7. In *Connaissance des arts*, June 1997.

8. Ossip Zadkine, *Le Maillet et le ciseau*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1968.

9. Marie-José Mondzain, *Transparence, opacité? Quatorze artistes contemporains chinois*, *Diagonales*, p. 39. Exhibition of the same name at the Maison de la Villette, Paris, September-October, 2000.