## a selection of art works 1992-2020 jean-marie babonneau better world inc.

babonneau@gmail.com • www.babonneau.com



Test lumière en coulisses (autoportrait) avant ma session de portraits du groupe Islandais Sigur Rós, à Copenhague, 2017 © photo by jm babonneau

#### JEAN M. BABONNEAU | **BIOGRAPHY**

photography | video | limited edition artworks | www.babonneau.com

French artist born in 1971, Jean M. Babonneau grew up with two cultures due to the expatriation of his French parents in Germany in the 70s. Back in France, he branched out from his scientific studies in order to enter the Nantes Academy of Fine Arts (BFA) where he fell in love with the creative potential of photography. He was admitted to the National School of Photography in Arles, from which he graduated in 1999 (MFA).

During his years of study in Arles, the young photographer produced exhibition art prints in Lucien Clergue's darkroom from the original negatives featuring Pablo Picasso, Jean Cocteau and many nudes by the master, co-founder of the international photo festival Les Rencontres d'Arles.

As soon as he finished his studies in 1999, his taste for exploring foreign cultures took Jean M. Babonneau to Reykjavík in Iceland, where he began his professional career by making numerous portraits of Icelandic artists and musicians for more than 3 years. There he produced the photographic book Your Brand New Ancestral Eyes (2002), animations and video installations. The artist is fascinated by the possibilities of immersive storytelling in a space filled with images and other media.

At the end of 2002, the photographer moved to Copenhagen, Denmark, continuing his Nordic exploration. There he divides his time between art projects (photographic series and video installations), photography workshops as an intervening artist and photographic commissions for the press and other clients. Regularly he contributes with the artistic direction on photo book projects and music album visuals. Since his professional beginnings, JM Babonneau has not stopped cooperating with musicians by making their portraits or developing original visuals intended to accompany their musical creations.

In 2016, his portrait of the late artist Biogen (Sigurbjörn Porgrímsson), an Icelandic figure of techno & electronic music, was released as the cover of the posthumous double album *On With The Show* produced by his family and friends. In the summer of 2019, his images of the Icelandic band Sigur Rós were released in the group's deluxe anniversary box sets (CD and Vinyl), to mark the 20th anniversary of their mythic album Ágætis Byrjun (1999).

Since 2013, regular visits to Belarus have resulted in the production of a large body of images - photographs and videos - that will be the subject of one of his next projects. His young franco-belarusian daughter is the main motivation of his regular visits.

His personal experiments and obsessions weave the breadcrumb trail between projects that take as their origin in autobiographical references (starting from the principle that every particular carries in itself a universality) and the existentialist questions of the artist, whose career is at the crossroads between several European cultures: a lonely position in the midst of a rooted and rather monocultural majority. Neither entirely French, nor really Danish, JM Babonneau also carries alongside a little of his German childhood and his years as a young artist in Iceland. Photographic commissions for the cultural press, portraits and meetings of artists and other creative minds inspire JM Babonneau: authors, architects, musicians, philosophers, filmmakers, designers, curators and his fellow visual artists.

JM Babonneau's artistic work, like a Rolling Stone who makes his home where he lays his hat, readily mixes genres drawing both from the real and the imaginary, with a particular taste for nightly staging in real locations (outside the abstraction of the photo studio) that the night, dreamlike time, transfigures into spaces imbued with the surf of the subconscious. His photographs and video installations attempt at whispering little visual poems to our senses in order to make us rediscover our common places with new eyes.

The year 2018 marked a notable milestone in the life of JM Babonneau who has now spent more than half of his life in Northern Europe. He celebrated this anniversary in Copenhagen with a more ambitious second edition of his utopian project with a simultaneous photographic orchestra featuring the portrait of a social network: One World, One Family - initially launched in Arles in 1998.



#### **COLLABORATIONS**

An instinctive practitioner more than a theorist of his own expression, exhibiting relatively little his continuous personal production by lack of funding, JM Babonneau, fed by an inner creative urgency and recurrent visions, readily receives constructive critical feedback and strategical career counseling, wishes to cooperate on the work of theoretical writing and the dissemination of his intimate works with the respective specialties of curators, art historians, art critics, publishers and gallery owners as to the opportunities to share them with an audience.

#### THE GOALS MAY BE:

- integration of works in a collective exhibition or into an art collection in your country and other countries that you are connected with,
- cooperation on putting forward a certain project and setting up a strategy for fundraising and planning for an art exhibition and / or art book edition,
- getting recommended to experienced professionals of your local art scene and publishing industry.

#### **INSPIRATIONS**

• photography: Robert Frank (series in Mabou), Wolfgang Tilmanns, Evgen Bavcar, Ralph Eugene Meatyard, Francesca Woodman, John Divola, Olaf Breuning, Roger Ballen, Les Krims, Denis Roche, Raoul Ubac, Hans Bellmer, Bernard Faucon, Jim Dine, Dieter Appelt, Gjon Mili, Anton Corbijn, Michel Séméniako, Martin Parr, Philip-Llorca diCorcia, Erwin Wurm, Fischli & Weiss, Helmut Newton, Nobuyoshi Araki, Gilles Berquet, Jean-Paul Goude, Guy Bourdin, Tim Walker, Lucien Clergue, Georges Rousse, Larry Clark, Man Ray, Etienne Jules Marey, Duchenne de Boulogne, August Sander, Bernd & Hilla Becher, Christer Strömholm, Krass Clement, Keld Helmer-Petersen, ...

- video & film: David Lynch, Wim Wenders, Alain Resnais, Alejandro Jodorowsky, Bertrand Blier, Christopher Nolan, Bong Joon-Ho, Akira Kurosawa, Georges Méliès, Alex Garland, Charlie Chaplin, ...
- art installations: Doug Aitken, William Kentridge, Sophie Calle, Bruce Naumann, Pipilotti Rist, Banksy, Nam June Paik, Christian Boltanski, Peter Greenaway, Jesper Just, ...
- **literature & ideas**: Henry Miller, Jack Kerouac, Milan Kundera, Paul Auster, Marshall McLuhan, Edward T. Hall, Roland Barthes, Walter Benjamin, Noam Chomsky, Naomi Klein, Montesquieu, Michel de Montaigne, Étienne de La Boétie, Franz Kafka, Jacques Prévert, Jean de La Fontaine, Grimm brothers, HC Andersen, ...



### **2020 >** A SNOWLESS WINTER | UN HIVER SANS NEIGE

#### A photographic study of the northern suburbs of Copenhagen, Denmark

#### STATEMENT OF INTENT

The series of photographs "A Snowless Winter" created around Copenhagen (in its northern suburbs and small towns adjoining the residential villa districts), in Denmark, in winter 2020, contains several ideas:

• The creative diversion of a photographic application under the iOS operating system for iPhone, working with an algorithm initially designed to digitize physical documents and whiteboards flat or in perspective, which I chose to 'use for an unexpected purpose: to photograph architecture, parks and street scenes in different areas of the Greater Copenhagen. The degradation of the image resolution and the color space creates an aesthetic that would suggest snowy landscapes with its white-washed images whereas there was no snow at all in Copenhagen during the winter of 2020. The title of the series deliberately contradicts the whiteness of the images.

• Scenes of tame nature in parks in suburban areas, on the streets of residential areas and in cemeteries, where joggers run, where residents walk their dogs, and where mothers take their babies in their strollers for a walk in the fresh air, become almost drawings where the "photographic" has been obliterated from its prefix "photo" in favor of its suffix "graphic". This process, directly producing these images as they are, without subsequent retouching - apart from the construction of the diptychs and triptychs, could imply that our everyday and banal reality can appear differently through an apocalyptic filter à la John Carpenter's "They Live", wearing the sunglasses of truth, although my images evoke a certain smoothness and visual poetry in my sense. Indeed our daily routines could be more fragile and precarious than we imagine, when we think of the global warming, which probably is the cause of the absence of snow. Global warming, melting polar ice or the coronavirus can suddenly change our lives. The whitish images in the series can also represent a metaphor for contemporary scenes instantly turning into nostalgic memories, much like the snowy landscapes of my childhood in the 1970s. Memory fails us with age and past reality metamorphoses into an old ideal dream.









• The diptych and triptych mounts, where two or three images are in dialogue in an almost invisible way sometimes, create in their juxtaposition a new fictional landscape, perhaps a parallel reality in which the imagination can circulate freely. These associations are intended as small visual poems. This woman with an umbrella walking a young child is dominated by a rain of huge red berries. This dog master has no reflection in this puddle. These cut tree trunks adjoin the wooden fences that they may become. These minimalist traffic signs offer an ironic counterweight to the profusion of natural trees, with complex and mysterious geometry. These white landscapes are a simulacrum of Nordic winter, which the real snow has not covered with its white coat. My approach does not really question reality, as many documentary photographers do, I rather try to infuse a little poetry and beauty into the mundane, in the destruction and taming of plants, of nature, in a privileged world which often remains blind to its privileges in the amnesia of the daily routines of life. I am the stranger who walks the streets and parks of a foreign country where I have spent many years and which I still strive to rediscover by questioning my own habits and methods proven in my practice of the photographic medium.

#### **ARTISTIC REFERENCES**

In terms of the degradation of image quality as an aesthetic, I was fascinated by the early Xerox photo books (1964-1970) by Japanese photographer Nobuyoshi Araki, then early in his career. These toner-scuffed images show faces with greyish tones and faded shadows that can evoke the material wear and tear of images, the vanity of our lives whose memory of familiar faces erodes and eventually fades over time. This effect of quasi-solarization can also evoke the effect of radiation of the American atomic bombs which Japan lived in its flesh in August 1945.

On the other hand, the very graphic images of urban landscapes and industrial decay, of dilapidated surfaces of building facades by Danish photographer Keld Helmer-Petersen (1920-2013) whose retrospective I saw in the fall of 2019 at the Danish National Museum of Photography in Copenhagen also imbued me with their beauty.

This process, unusual in my own photographic vocabulary, allowed me to explore a new tool for creating images, to rediscover landscape photography and "street photography", but also the Danish capital and its surroundings where I have lived for 17 years, with a fresh outlook.

Jean M. Babonneau - Copenhagen, March 15, 2020

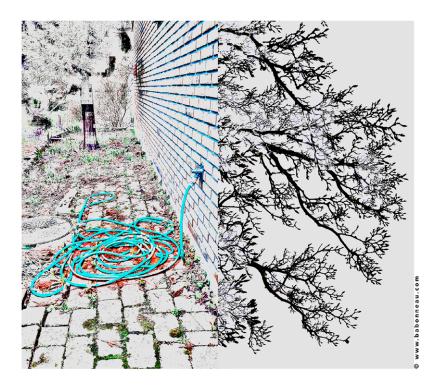
















## 2013 - 2020 > BELARUS (work in progress)

#### Photographic series under construction on Belarus - indeterminate number of permanent images (archive of tens of thousands of images)

Belarus is a country in Eastern Europe that is not well known in Western countries because of its decades of isolation in the Soviet empire behind the Iron Curtain. A European country of Slavic culture torn in the course of history between its different conquerors, Belarus is today under the economic, political and cultural influence of its Russian big brother. A desire for openness is emerging in this country long isolated and bordering the European Union.

Since the spring of 2013, I continue my intimate exploration of Belarus. A corpus of images that I would like to publish in the form of a monographic book, far away from the style of the touristic guide, respecting my vision as a visual author loving to present things in a personal way.

In parallel, I would like to edit a documentary film on Belarus with the numerous video sequences that I filmed there as well. Another part of my intimate rendering and works about Belarus.

Here is the link to a Belarusian TV reportage shot with me in Minsk in May 2018 (with english subtitles) : <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qEGGqbjnUsl</u>

The tensed political situation in the country since Summer 2020 has brought it to international attention.















## 2013 - 2018 > DARK FANTASIES

#### A photographic study of the fetish world in Copenhagen, Denmark

During a burlesque show I photographed in 2010 in Denmark, I encountered fetishists in the costumed audience for the occasion. I am fascinated by people with an unusual passion, bordering on social norms. After some negotiation, I was allowed to photograph at a first fetish event in Copenhagen, and then at a second and then more.

Discreet and polite spy, dressed in a black suit, I thus began my photographic study of the Danish fetish and BDSM world, in exchange for photographs for the party organizers and their members. Working under strict rules for the protection of identities and image rights, my portraits are allowed and my mood images are often long blurred exposures or images that do not include faces in order to preserve the anonymity of the protagonists.

During a festive gathering, a whole nocturnal fauna of people of all sexual tendencies, and often seemingly innocuous in their daily life, becomes a crowd of actors and actresses of their sexual fantasies, alone, as a couple or in groups. I have also witnessed a fairly great social mix among these people sharing the same passion, the same need, the same aspirations.

This metamorphosis is made possible thanks to different devices in subdued spaces (gynecologist's table, whipping cross, bondage pulleys), accessories (high-heeled shoes, garter belts, corsets, dildos, studded leather collars, leashes, ropes, chains, whips), rites (dominant / dominated) and implicit codes involving latex costumes, cross-dressing (appropriation of clothing of the opposite sex), make-up or masks allowing free recourse to the imagination and scenarios of the participants and the practice of 'a consented libertinism, a freedom of sexual mores while respecting the limits of others, known or unknown.

In a context of sensory exploration, performances by artists and annually fetish couture fashion shows, the atmosphere is both stimulating and good-natured, against all expectations of a neophyte. There, I got to know several people who posed for the images of one of my side projects on fetishism (staged images), outside of the context of the events from which my present photographs are taken.

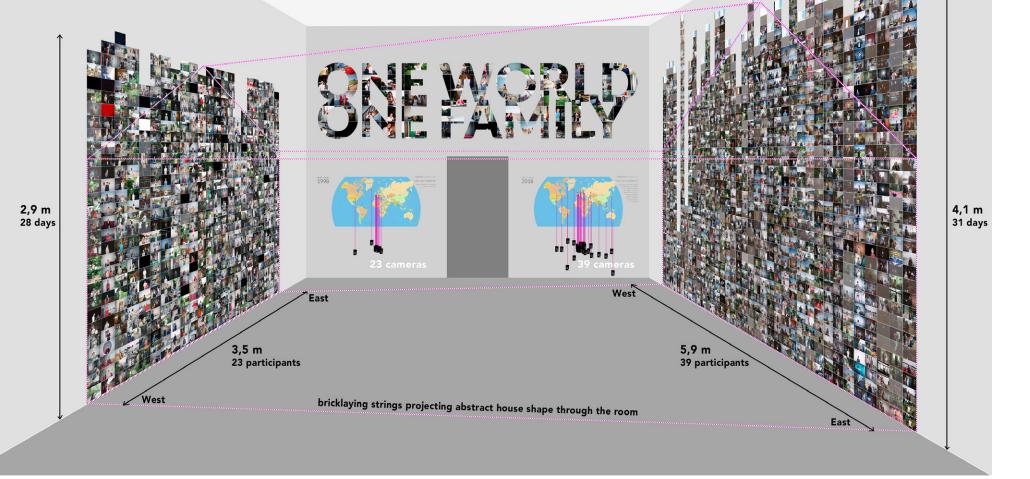
The 25 to 35 photographs proposed represent a selection from among the images in a series produced over a period of 5 years.



## ONE WORLD, ONE FAMILY | 1998 - 2018

#### the analog portrait of a social network beyond borders over 20 years

- an international and participatory photographic work created by jm babonneau. 51 participants over two sessions (May 1998 and May 2018), in 24 countries, having their daily portrait taken almost simultaneously.









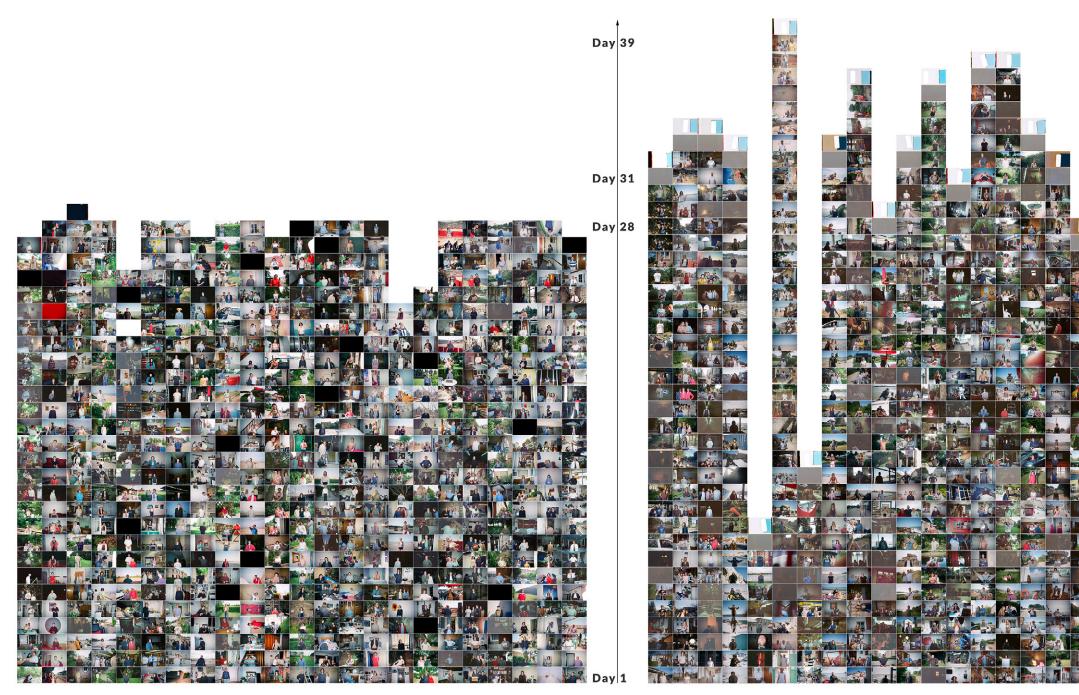






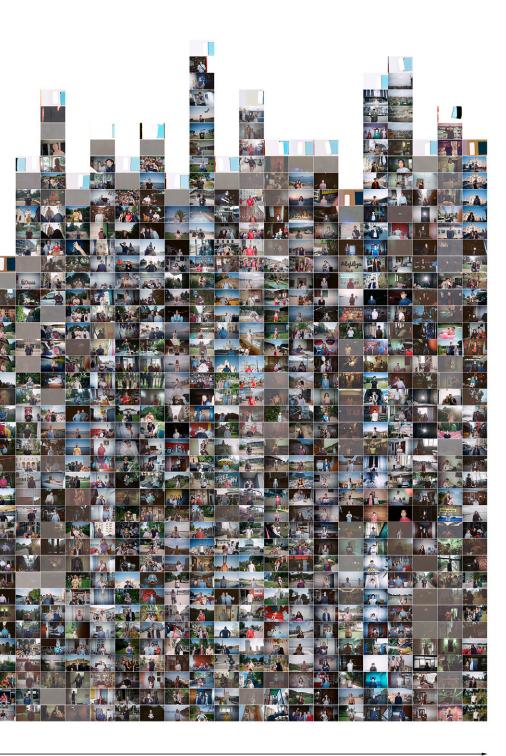


Presentation of the 51 participants, 11 of whom participated in the two sessions, in May 1998 and in May 2018.



SESSION 2018

West



- 23 persons in May 1998 (in 13 cities, 7 countries)
- 39 persons in May 2018 (in 35 cities, 24 countries)

Each person had 1 portrait of themselves made each day of the month of May, with the same model of personalized disposable camera that I sent them accompanied by an instruction leaflet.

Here are all the portraits taken in May 1998 and May 2018. 11 persons attended both sessions.

Each narrative strip is displayed vertically from the bottom (day 1) to the top (last day). Some participants failed to complete the entire project, others made more images than expected (especially in 2018).

The installation is conceived as two implementations in a room (minimum dimensions L: 6 m, W: 6 m, H: 5 m): an analog one (1) and a digital one (2).

1) Two image walls face each other in the room, linked together by masonry wires representing the space of an archaic and virtual house under construction. Another wall will also display world maps from both sessions with all of the original disposable cameras hanging at each geographic point locating each project participant. A few tablets (iPad style) containing the two photo walls in the form of high-resolution digital image files will allow the visitor to browse through all the photos and intuitively zoom in on each portrait. Enlargements of a few selected images, in the form of prints or projections, can further enrich the immersive experience of visitors.

2) Alternatively the walls of images could be displayed as dynamic (and possibly interactive) video projections enhancing narrative (vertical) columns of participants' stories, as well as narrative (horizontal) rows of daily simultaneous participants' portraits around the world (by obscuring the other rows / columns sequentially).

A limited number of installations will be offered for purchase from the art collections.

Work dimensions:

• Photo Wall 1998 Height: 290 cm Length: 345 cm • Photo Wall 2018 Height: 410 cm Length: 585 cm

(The proposed dimensions are based on a scale of  $10 \times 15$  cm per image - however the resolution of the scans in my possession would allow enlargements of the formats to at least  $30 \times 40$  cm per image).





## 2015 > C'est du Solide

Series of photographs, drawings and texts. Artist's book. (extracts from the layout, in progress until publication)



















































# BELARUS : STONES AND FACES #1 photographs by jm babonneau ( www.babonneau.com

## 2013 > Belarus: Stones and Faces

#### Photographic series of 55 images - Minsk & Kalatchi, Belarus

Belarus is a country in Eastern Europe that is not well known in Western countries because of its decades of isolation in the Soviet empire behind the Iron Curtain. A European country of Slavic culture torn in the course of history between its different conquerors, Belarus is today under the economic, political and cultural influence of its Russian big brother. Religious traditions have survived the authoritarian and anticlerical communist regime. There are Orthodox and Catholic churches and cemeteries.

In the spring of 2013, I explored three cemeteries, the first located in the suburbs of Minsk and the two others located about fifty kilometers north of Minsk, near the village of Kalatchi. I was fascinated by the anonymous and often solitary faces adorning the gravestones, like vanities telling a little about their own history of photography, beyond personal stories. The colored fences delineating the space of a tomb or a group of family tombs reminded me of the little country houses, the dachas, similarly multicolored.

Before the Day of the Dead at the beginning of May, the Radonitsa, the families come to repaint and clean their burials, before returning there to celebrate their ancestors with some offerings. They even drink a glass of vodka with their dead on the day of their commemoration. You will see in one of my images a small plate placed on a grave with candy next to a small glass that will be filled with vodka on that day.

A culture can be defined by its traditions and rites of passage, those of birth, marriage and also those of death. You can learn a lot about a culture by studying how people treat death and honor their missing. My series is a small photographic study, in the continuity of my exploration of Belarus since 2013. A body of images that I would like to publish in the form of a book of photographs.



#### le petit tour Paris - København

BAR

PIZZERU

proj. 2

PARIS

proj. 3

København

proj. I

en interaktiv videoinstallation som simultan cykeltur i to byer

## 2013 > Le Petit Tour | Paris-Copenhagen (v.1) An interactive and immersive installation featuring a virtual bicycle-tour

in both capital cities simultaneously, France - Denmark, without worn AR or VR interface.

Paris

Shown at French Art Days, in Øksnehallen, Copenhagen, January 2013. 2500 visitors in 2 days.

Koebenhavn

Installation view & preparatory study. Programming & interfaces by F. Dilé.

## 2011 - 2012 > Muses & Mazes (v.1)

Photographic series & art book (33 x 28 x 2 cm, 170 pages, 176 images)

- Images made in France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Iceland, Denmark.

A chronological arrangement of images, sketches and notes made between 1990 and 2012 with round trips between intimate, personal, biographical and documentary images alongside staged images born in my imagination. The images in diptychs or triptychs on the pages enter into dialogue or collide, the various textures (analog and digital photographs made on cameras of different resolutions, screenshots from telephone screens, videos and computers, drawings, handwritings) are deliberately mixed to offer a generous and polymorphous, non-systematic and non-typological artistic experience open to the reader's imagination.



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Chemin de fer : processus de mise en page (2011)

## 2010 > Camera Lucida | La Chambre Claire

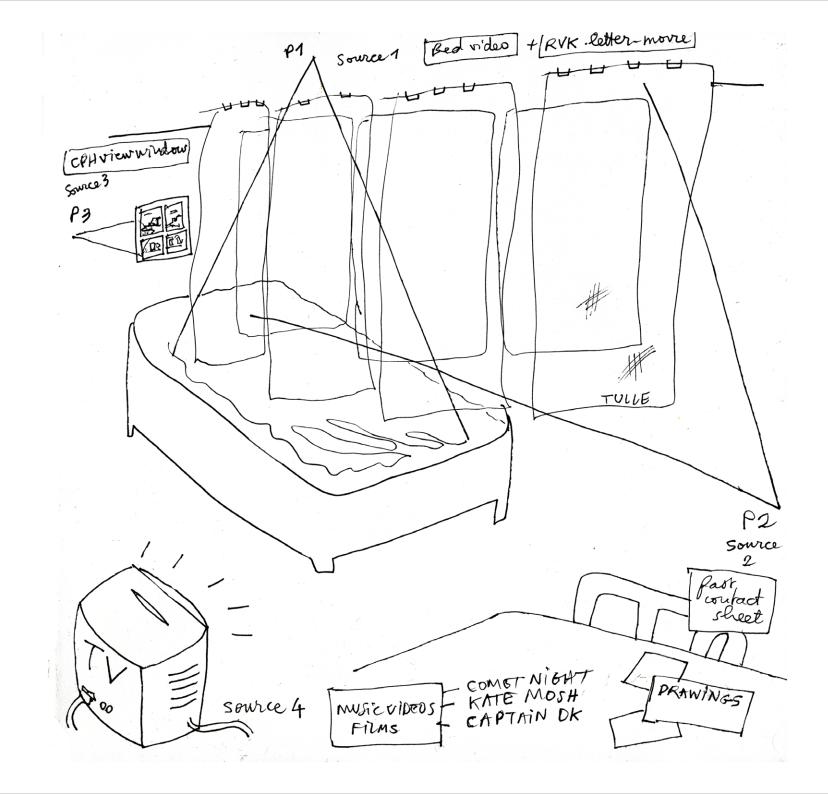
Audiovisual Installation. France, Iceland, Denmark. Dimensions: variable. First version exhibited at the Copenhagen Photo Festival 2010.

Sleeper(s)/Lovers in trompe-l'oeil in a real bed, the sight of a window that scrolls the seasons, pages of writings, albums and drawings that appear and disappear on the white sheets placed on the table. Distant voices, whispers and sweet dreamy melodies add to build up the atmosphere. A work that evokes time passing, the faces we have loved and the "aura" of personal images. An automatic bedroom inhabited by dreams and ghosts. The work borrows the title of Roland Barthes' essay on photography from 1980.

Installation view, video captures and preparatory studies between 1999 and 2010.







## 2005 - 2007 > The Healer

#### Photo series - Denmark (extracts). The diptych or triptych images in t

The diptych or triptych images in the series, conceived as a book layout, enter into a dialogue or collide. Snippets of daily life, lived or imagined, transfigured into a existentialist visual poem by a french artist in the kingdom of Denmark.







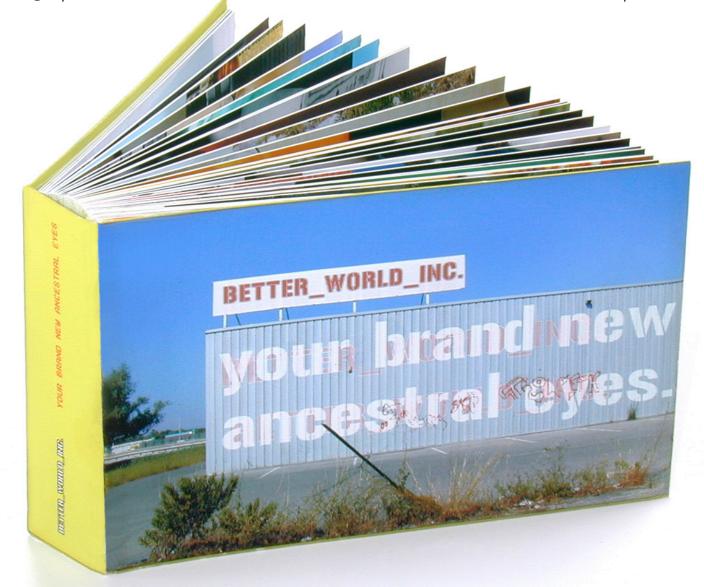






## 2002 > Your Brand New Ancestral Eyes

Photographic book & audiovisual installation, Iceland (extracts from composites).













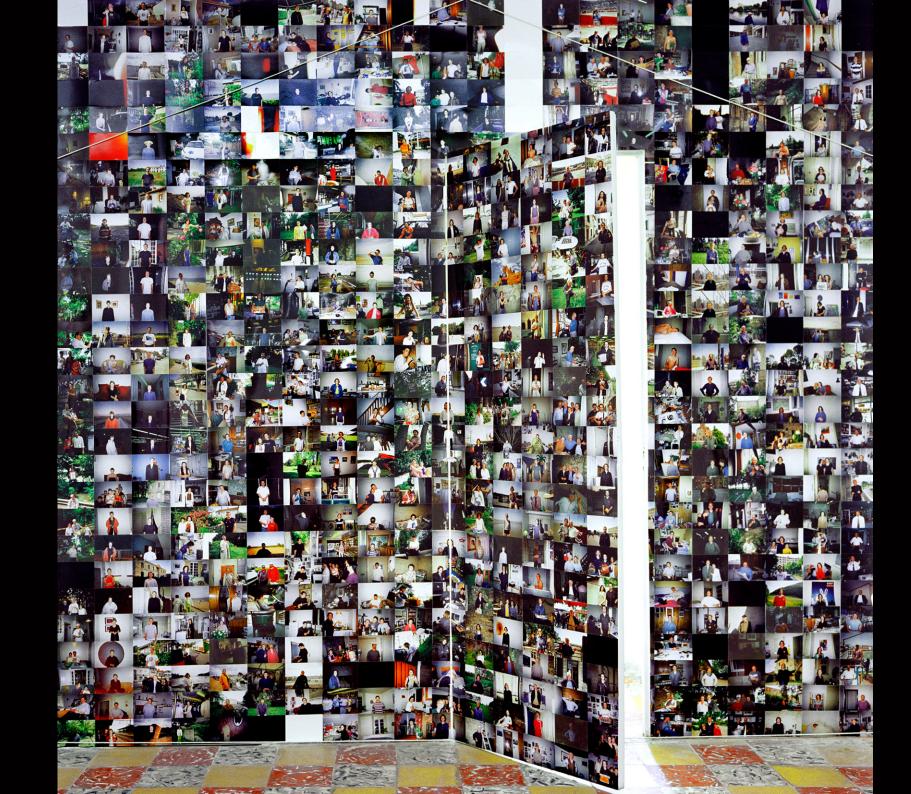






Images in diptychs or triptychs in a book layout, enter into dialogue or collide. Snippets of daily life, lived or imagined, transfigured in a visual poem in pocket format by a French artist in Reykjavík, Iceland.

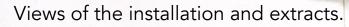




## 1998-1999 > Un Monde, Une Famille | One World, One Family

LE

Participatory and international photographic project as series & photographic installation (first edition & version), France.



The project was extended in May 2018, 20 years later (version 2), Denmark.



A participative photographic process, like an orchestra of photographers involving 23 people (including myself) in 13 cities in 7 countries (France, Germany, Italy, Austria, Greece, United States, Iceland) in order to create the collective portrait of a family and a social network, a staged documentary playing on the



simultaneity and ubiquity, before the creation of virtual social networks





than the arm) and simple instructions glued to the back of the devices: start on the 1st May 1998, have your portrait taken once a day, every day for 28 days (28 poses in the camera) at the standard distance of 1.5 meters (use the string length as a help), be framed in the center of the picture, try to change background,

location or environment every day, use the flash at night and indoors, send me back your camera by mail when the process is completed (after 28 days). 616 portraits were processed and printed on photo paper and assembled as a wallpaper in the installation room of 5 x 4 x 3 meters with a light sign of the title of





the project, a world map on which all devices were hung according to their geographical origin with text frames showing all the names of the participants and their relationship to myself. An unknown namesake named Jean-Marie Babonneau, a retired 64 year-old man found in the phone book agreed to partici-

pate. This project originated from a personal dream and developed into a shared project has different levels of reading / interpretation that I leave open to the viewers to conjecture, beyond the notion of quest for identity. Exhibition at the National School of Photography of Arles, June 1999.



Photographe Lucien Clergue B.P. 84 19, Rue Aristide Briand 13632 Arles Cedex Tél: 04 90 49 94 96 Fax: 04 90 96 60 81 Alus 15-11-98 -Madame, De svis l'un der participants De svis l'un der participants Dar projet de Mur Bakonneau griet me semble-t-il a 1/2 Sas griet me semble-t-il a 1/2 Sas griet me semble-t-il a 1/2 Sas aunhitiere et pleur d'hamour aunhitiere et pleur d'hamour, c'at une demie prider et me t'an arcepte are Joie, t'an arcepte vone 20 commander t'an arcepte vone 20 commander t'an arcepte vone et grid de votre margue et grid Madura torcher puer me Le pruhic Seidnit. m'a seidnit. Madame, Vors en seidner Vors en semerciant par Avance de vous prie de croie Madrine à Verproprion de mis Madrine à Verproprion de mis Jeutiments les plus de voires Jeutiments les plus de voires

Letter of recommendation by Lucien Clergue, June 15, 1998 for my photographic project, as a participant and the co-founder of the photo festival Les Rencontres d'Arles.

Jean-Marie Babonneau heitir franskur Ijósmyndari sem staldraði við á ritstjórn Mannlífs í upphafi árs. Hann hefur undanfarið ár unnið að allsérstakri sýningu sem hann hyggst setja upp á

4/4625

Eftir Gisla Egil Hrafnsson Myndir: Gisli Egill Hrafns

Jean-Marie Babonneau hefur safnað saman 23 konum og körlum úr 13 borgum viðs vegar um heiminn til þess að halda nokkurs konar dagbók í ljósmyndum í einn mánuð. Þessar sjálfsmyndir eru teknar við margs konar tækifæri og við ólíklegustu athafnir, t.d. í nautaatshring, við uppvaskið eða bara í baði. Jean-Marie sendi hverjum þátttakanda einnota myndavél og setti einfaldar reglur við myndatókuna. Útkoman verður síðan sett upp á stóran sýningarfléka þar sem allar þessar rúm-

SIT

lega 600 sjálfsmyndir birta daglegan veruleika þátttakenda. Sýningin ber heitið "Un monde, une famille" eða "Einn heimur, ein fjölskylda" og markmiðið er að setja hana upp á næstu mánuðum í öllum 13 borgunum sem þátttakendurnir koma frá. Einn ljósmyndaranna er Kristín Birna Óðinsdóttir sem tók myndirnar sínar í Reykjavík. Þess má geta að Jean-Marie leitar að sýningarstað í Reykjavík gábendingar væru vel þegnar.

20 MANNLÍF

Publication about my project in Icelandic magazine Mannlíf in January 1999

## 1997 > Walls of Emotion

A family album revisited photographic series and book, France (extracts from the layout)



# 1997 > Walls of Emotion

A family album revisited photographic series and book, France (extracts from the layout)









#### 1994 - 1995 > RANDOM ACCESS MEMORY

Photographic series, France (excerpts). Personal & family objects staged into multi-exposure photographs as still-lives.









### 1993 - 1997 > THANATOGRAPHIES

Photographic series, France (excerpts). Being behind and in front of the camera in the dark, I staged a dance of monsters and skeletons in long exposures.







2338

## **1997 > NIGHT WRITINGS**

2

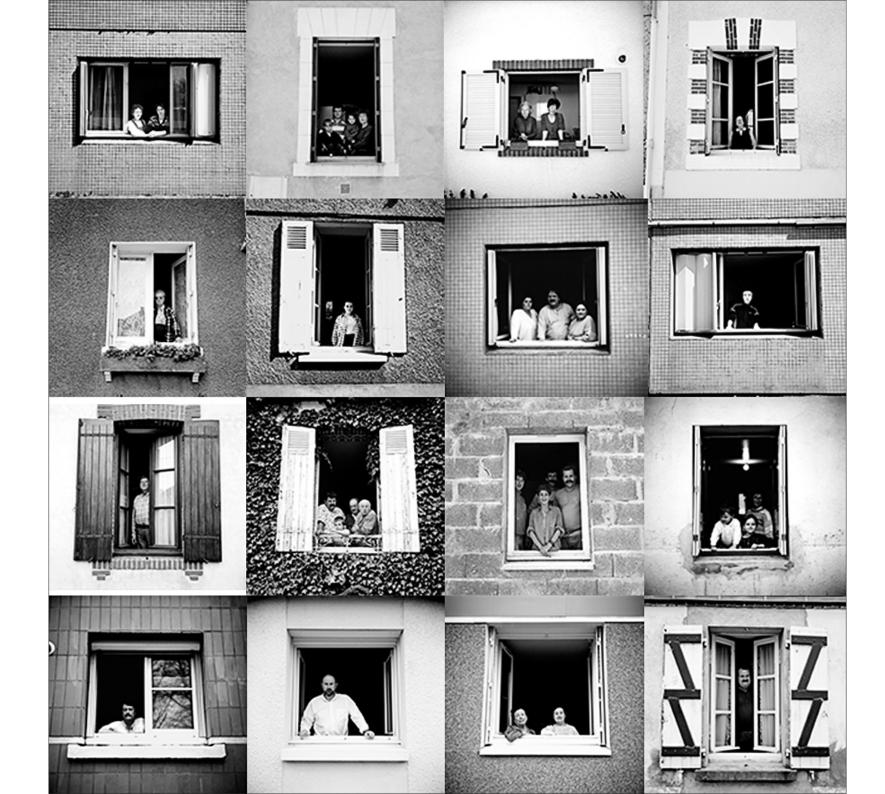
Photographic series, Austria & France (excerpts). Love letters written in space on location (english & fre<u>nch texts).</u>

> Follow me tonite



#### 1993 - 1994 > Portraits / Windows

A selection of 16 portraits / windows - Nantes region. Various social environments and neighborhoods. Door to door approach.



## 1992 - 1993 > Maisons | Houses

Series of 4 unique photographic composites - Nantes, France.

Original black & white medium-format 120-format negatives, displayed under glass plate.

One of my first photographic works.









