

MARION SCEMAMA

SUMMER 89/ A SLOW BOAT TO CHINA

du 3 juin au 17 juillet 2021

Then summer came. Or rather, the *Summer*. You have to let this wording come to the surface like this. Hear it rise like a breeze, swell like a wave, and wilt away like waves sloshing on the shore. More than a title, *Summer 89* is a call. Once felt, images come back to you. They have the light colors of peaceful, intimate tranquility, or at other stormier times those of burning, arid passion. In each person, they awaken an immediate resonance. However, the intensity that emanates from each section of photographs and film, burning the surface and creating a moiré effect on the pixels, also brings forth another emotional tone.

It is clashing, eruptive and complex. Its rhythms are asynchronous, and its paths are bumpy when even the horizon itself might be clear as far as the eye can see. Because this is about a special story, about the dazzling friendship, about this "love beyond genders" that linked for nine years and forever Marion Scemama to David Wojnarowicz. It is about an emotional and intellectual dialogue as well as a therapeutic and ecstatic relationship to creation, traversed by both incantatory and haunted images.

At New Galerie, which presents Marion Scemama's first monographic exhibition in Paris, the walls resonate with a prosopopoeia woven in shadows, lights and stroboscopic effects, as expressed through a shared mechanical mechanism: the "desiring-machine" of the camera or video camera.

Marion Scemama and David Wojnarowicz met in February 1984. The former was then a photographer-reporter for the French press. For the past two years, she had been in New York, roaming the East Village and becoming passionate about the frescoes at Hudson Pier 34. The latter, a fugitive from hetero-patriarchal normality, his lust for life armed with a fierce lust for life, was the author of these paintings. From their meeting works of art were to be born. Alternatively, they were signed by one, by the other, or by both.

David Wojnarowicz died on July 22, 1992 from AIDS. Marion Scemama had known he was sick since August 1988. *Summer 89*, the body of work presented on the upper floor of the gallery, is the name of the summer hiatus torn

from the disease. The two of them, accompanied by the videographer François Pain, her companion, spent a few weeks in the Adirondacks in upstate New York. An 8mm SVHS video camera accompanied them. Every day, they filmed themselves, experimented with special effects, and watched the rushes in the evening.

A Slow Boat To China, hanging on the lower floor under the vaults, this time was their last trip. In May 1991, David Wojnarowicz and Marion Scemama, this time alone except for notebooks, cameras and a handful of plastic animals, undertook a road trip in the New Mexico desert. They had a fight, made up, and never saw each other again.

During these years, Marion Scemama encouraged him to create. She wished to overcome her own helplessness by helping him to express his despair and revolt. He talked to her about beauty, savagery, about momentum toward an incredible world after death. She offered him images of her shared intimacy and heterosexual desires. In return, he sent her tiny fictions and urged her to make a film, this film that he knew she carried in her body.

The exhibition is a testament to a reversible creative process. The constellation of framed images hung on the walls detaches different statuses inside a same expansive flow: that of an inextinguishable lust for life. There are photographs and travel films, the documentation of the genesis of the works, and the works themselves, some of which have already become part of history while others still remain lurking at its door.

This collaborative work continues to write itself. It is being written before our very eyes, and Marion Scemama offers us two matrix moments. It's like a fragile attempt to hold on to a moment which flows like grains of sand out of an open hand, as well as an energetic core as incandescent as the peaking desert sun darting its burning rays in all directions. There is no end to this dialogue. At least no other one except the *This Is The End* which comes from the central film, played on the car radio by three young souls leaving for the holidays.

Ingrid Luquet-Gad