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Guillaume Robert / Nergal

Nergal, 2005 (video, 17'20'')

Project Room

Presse release

A proposal by Yvane Chapuis

Exhibition from February 24 to April 8 2006
Opening Friday 24th February 2006, 6-9 pm

Special evening reception wednesday 15th march 2006, 6-9 pm
For an evening of common openings in the East of Paris

The video *Nergal* is the third step in a project initially developed in collaboration with Amala Hely : *Global garden or hanging gardeners*. *Clarence* (2003) directed by Amala Hely and *Asdiss* (2004) a joint production by the two artists are the first videos in this developing series.

Global garden or the hanging gardeners is peopled with different fictional characters. Ran, Clarisse, Kia, Simon and Asdis were born between 1973 and 1977. We see them developing in the years following 2000. Dispersed between Teheran and Los Angeles it so happens that they run into Nergal, Marduk and Enlil, three gods from the Sumerian pantheon, as well as Clarence, an Amorite prince born in Babylon. They meet, avoid each other, desire each other and run away. They are present in the world without being particularly active in it. Despite themselves, they are plunged into a complex and vibrant universe in which there is an intertwined play of historical and contemporary references, a Daedalus in which any idea of destination remains in suspense. This general canvas does not determine a fixed path for each video, but indicates types of nodes (dates, places, characters) destined to produce texts, images and sounds. It is a tool and a creative engine which remains supple and destined to change. Represented in the form of a projection map of the world, this script maps the progress of the characters and links the Middle East, Europe and the western United States in a single narrative network.

Each video shows moments in the development of the characters while evolving its own formal autonomy.

« Nergal », from the Sumerian « nè.eri.gal », means the « Authority of the Big City », in other words « Hell ». Shooting took place at the end of the spring of 2005 on the outskirts of a European town. A small international airport, a golf course, and a military camp occupy this area. Over the last 10 years, the topography has mutated and a town has grown up, covering the swamps and the fields. Nergal and Ran live on the threshold of this city.

Extracts from texts, sometimes just simple sounds, emerge or dissolve in the soundtrack which mixes live recordings and musical samples. These texts come from two works, *The Voyages* of Ibn Batuta and the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. In the 14th century, Ibn Batuta, of Moroccan origin, spent thirty years travelling through the Islamic world. He discovered a Baghdad destroyed by war. The *Epic of Gilgamesh* (-3500 BC) tells of the friendship of two heroes, among other things, and also of Uruk, the first city.

If heterogeneous literary sources are thus intertwined (we can also hear an extract of an advertisement for The Palm promoting the delights of artificial islands built off the coast of Dubai), *Nergal* also contains a certain visual culture fed by a contemporary history of cinema and art.

This video work (like the two previous ones) in which geographical, temporal, symbolic and intimate spaces intermingle, presents a space of elliptical contours of narratives and elegiac and fragile visions in which the imagination can operate.

Guillaume Robert was born in 1975. He lives and works in Paris.

In addition to his video project *Global garden or the hanging gardens*, he works as an artist and video artist in the field of performing arts. He is currently collaborating in the creation of *sx.rx.Rx* (directed by Patricia Allio), a theatrical performance presented in 2004 within the framework of the Soirées Nomades at the Cartier Foundation and at the National Theatre of Brittany and which will be presented in May 2006 at the Kunsten Arts Festival in Brussels.

Thanks to Rodolphe Blanchet (Nergal) et Christophe Dréano (Ran) et à Amala Hely. Thanks to l'Aire libre et au campement Dromesko de Saint Jacques de la lande, à Benoit Gasnier, et à l'École des beaux-arts de Rueil-Malmaison (programme de résidence Synapse).

Documentation and photos, ask to : contact@galerie-maisonneuve.com