



Catherine

De Clipbel

Press kit

Photographier
les vodous:
Catherine De Clippel

5.11.2022
5.02.2023

Curators:

François Cheval
and Yasmine Chemali

Opening
on Friday 4.11.
2022
18:30

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The Mougins Center of Photography is an institution dedicated to still and moving images, tasked with promoting and exhibiting the many trends in contemporary photography. Open to all forms of photographic modernity, the Center, as a municipal institution, boosts the cultural and tourism sector of the town of Mougins, seeking to enhance the region and foster international communication. From its opening on July 3rd 2021, its mission is to support the creation and experimentations of artists of all profiles: from France or overseas, up-and-coming or established. This support takes various forms including producing, exhibiting, publishing and residencies. Other local authorities in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region (PACA), including those of Marseille and Nice, are already demonstrating a dynamic approach to photography by way of varied exhibitions or thanks to proactive publishing houses and diverse residency programs. The Mougins Center of Photography will complement these activities by providing a similar service for contemporary photography.

**“What arrives to us here, in full face,
unexpectedly, it is not the usual matter
of curiosity [...], this precious booty,
it was not within the reach of an ordinary
tourist, or even to an ethnologist
of the usual model, to conquer it [...]
Pierre Verger does not say all, and does not
show all. For he is also a wise man.”**

Foreword by Théodore Monod,
in Pierre Verger,
Dieux d'Afrique,
Paris: Paul Hartmann,
1954.

The exhibition
“Photographier
les vodous: Catherine
De Clippel” is the first part
of a two-phase research
project entitled
“Ce qui nous arrive ici,
en plein visage,”
a French expression
of Theodore Monod
meaning “What arrives
to us here, in full face.”
The exhibition “Amexica:
Marie Baronnet”
(4.03-4.06.2023)
will form the second
and final part.

**Photographier
les vodous:
Catherine De Clippel**

In Western culture, the Voodoo religion has long been considered as a web of bloody and evil superstitions. We have allowed ourselves to categorise Voodoo in the same way as magic or witchcraft, relegating Voodoo cults to the rank of primitive, ancestral, entrenched practices. However, Voodoos are contemporary to us. Established since immemorial times, they coexist alongside Christianity and Islam. Its “pantheon” includes the main figures of Mawu-Lisa, Hevieso, Sakpata and others surrounding them, such as Egu, Mami Watta, Dan and Zangbeto.

“Miserable forms of art” (Georges Bataille), the Voodoos are these soft, dripping, ill-defined forms, with a vaguely anthropomorphic silhouette, drowned in a magma of crusted matter made up of an accumulation of various objects, all of which shine under jets of oil, water, blood, alcohol and spittle. Called “god-objects” by Marc Augé (1988), Voodoos are at the same time an entity (or power), an object (sculpture) and a person (possessed) who embodies it. The activation of a Voodoo can only be done by a priest, chosen through the Fa (or divination), sometimes at a very young age. Only after having completed a phase of initiation do the “spouses” of the Voodoo become its incarnation, during danced and sung rituals (that are called possession). Today, organised events of political and cultural content around Voodoo contribute to the evolution of its image. Consequently, Voodoo is acquiring national and international visibility that responds to the desire for recognition of local populations (Porto-Novo International Festival, 2019).

Photographier les vodous: Catherine De Clippel

Photography leads us straightly to the heart of things through the concrete singularities it can pictures and by its proximity to the ritual. Voodoo, in Catherine De Clippel's photographic experience, refers to the optical idea of the hole, of an orifice set up in the darkroom. A place and a moment, a sensory experience that must be intentionally and effectively renewed in order to ward off external threats. What difference do we find between the dark room and the closed enclosure of Voodoo? In both, people, whether Western or not, seek appeasement and therapy and long to find the harmony of an always fragile and subjective world. If the facts are obscure, they are no less stubborn. They appear, fruits of chance and daily observation, and accumulate, orphaned, before finding their place in an organized discourse, temporarily. Visual anthropology builds its object in the mistrust of the word to inscribe others. More accurate, for a time, because closer to the sensitive.

If the mechanical image constitutes a set of visual information, what we now call a database, unreadable at first, it is made available to all and offers multiple possibilities of reading. Visual anthropology now takes into account this individual relationship that circulates within the image. Within the frame and off-camera, there is still room for the imagination and intuition of the viewer, whether educated or not in the social sciences. For photography has its own history, made up of all the images seen and collected according to the history of each individual. Catherine De Clippel's images follow those of Pierre Verger, the thoughts of Alfred Métraux, the intuitions of Georges Bataille, the questions of Michel Leiris... For in the course of time, over so many preparatory years, ways of seeing, perhaps ways of thinking, take shape, which determine the images that we believe to be silent but which turn out to be so talkative because they are insensitively instructed.

Catherine De Clippel

Catherine De Clippel (born in 1940 in Aalst, Belgium) is a photographer, director and producer of documentary films. Founder of Acmé films, she follows anthropologists Marc Augé and Jean-Paul Colleyn, and co-produces, with Arte, INA and RTBF, a series of films on animist practices in Africa, Brazil, Venezuela, Pakistan and India since the early 1980s. The documentary series *Vivre avec les dieux*, meaning “Living with the Gods” takes her on a journey mainly across Togo and Benin to discover Voodoo, which she has been photographing since 1988.

From 2002, her work is exhibited in international institutions: Muséum d'histoire naturelle in Lyon, Museum Rietberg of Zurich, Mudec in Milan, Milwaukee Art Museum, Post Vidai Contemporary Art Collection in Hô Chi Minh City. Catherine De Clippel shows her photographs at the musée de l'Homme alongside those of ethnologist Jean Rouch (Paris, 2017) and at the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain (Paris, 2019). In Benin, in 2019, she pursues her research around Voodoo and collaborates with the visual artist Dominique Zinkpè as part of an exhibition at Le Centre gallery in Abomey-Calavi. The publication *Vivre avec les dieux*, co-written with Marc Augé, Jean-Paul Colleyn and Jean-Pierre Dozon, was issued by the Maison des sciences de l'homme in 2019, followed by *Photographier les vodous, Togo-Benin 1988-2019* (Paris, Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2020). In 2022, the Mougins Center of Photography dedicates a solo show bringing together still and moving images from the Voodoo series shot in Togo and Benin.

Les Dieux-Objets

Screening / Installation

In a village on the Togolese coast, the priest-healer Sewavi lives with his Voodooos. His sanctuary is occupied by these “god-objects” whom he consults to cure, heal or seek remedies through divination. The Voodooos are very present in the daily life of the villagers.

Filming of
Les Dieux-Objets
© Catherine De Clippel

Togo, 1989
51', 16 mm, colour
Directors:
Jean-Paul Colleyn
and Catherine De Clippel
Scientific consultants:
Marc Augé
and Jean-Pierre Dozon
Production:
Acme films, RTBF,
La Sept, ORSTOM,
with the support
of the RTSR
and FR3.

Polyvision videographic
creation on suspended
Drop papers :
Jean Michel Sanchez
(on-situ)



Catherine De Clippel
filming a succession
ceremony
Anfouin, Togo
1988
© Jean-Paul Colleyn

Catherine De Clippel

Voodoo Lansan
1989
Séko, Togo
Inkjet print
on Rice paper Hahnemühle
135 x 90 cm



Voodoo Hevieso's axe
1988
Aklakou, Togo
Inkjet print
on Rice paper Hahnemühle
135 x 90 cm



Catherine De Clippel

Voodoo Legba
1989
Séko, Togo
Inkjet print
on Rice paper Hahnemühle
135 x 90 cm



Voodoo Zangbeto
1989
Séko, Togo
Inkjet print
on Rice paper Hahnemühle
135 x 90 cm



Catherine De Clippel

Voodoo Legba
1989
Séko, Togo
Inkjet print
on Rice paper Hahnemühle
90 x 135 cm



Voodoo Dzagli's associate
1989
Séko, Togo
Inkjet print
on Rice paper Hahnemühle
90 x 135 cm



Cahiers #5

Ce qui nous arrive ici,
en plein visage:
Catherine De Clippel
+ Marie Baronnet

Authors:

François Cheval
Jean-Paul Colleyn
Jérôme Esnouf

Publishing:

31 October 2022
Bilingual French/English
192 pages
29 €
Isbn: 979-10-90698-54-3

On sale
in the Mougins
Center of Photography
bookshop.



A barrier stands at the border between the United States and Mexico, a sinister defensive wall known to all. It alone embodies all walls, all refusals of the other. Elsewhere, in Fon and Ehwe countries, other markers stand in the form of earth sculptures posed directly on the ground. Protuberances that separate the living from the spirits. Between Marie Baronnet's photographs, taken at the Mexican border, and those of Catherine De Clippel, taken in West Africa, a surprising relationship emerges. Both capture what happens between that which closes and that which opens, a beyond that sparks our (very human) curiosity. We must always understand what is hidden, what is on the other side.

Excerpt from the Introduction, François Cheval

Public programme

Guided tour

by Catherine De Clippel

Saturday 5.11.2022

15:00

Admission → 6€

Screening series

Visual anthropology

Part I

Friday 16.12.2022

19:00 → 21:00

Free admission

Les Filles du vodou

Catherine De Clippel

[France, 1990, 27']

Eux et moi

Stéphane Breton

[France, 2001, 62']

Night Mail

Harry Watt

and Basil Wright

[UK, 1936, 25']

Visual anthropology

Part II

Saturday 14.01.2023

19:00 → 21:00

Free admission

The Song of Ceylon

Harry Watt

and Basil Wright

[UK, 1934, 37']

Moi un Noir

Jean Rouch

[France, 1959, 73']

Contacts

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de Mougins**

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Informations

Open

**5.11.2022 → 5.02.2023
13:00 → 18:00
Closed on Mondays
and Tuesdays**

Admission

**Adult → 6 €
Student → 3 €
Group → 4 €/pers.
Guided tours → 10 €/pers.**

Free

**1st Sunday of every month
Under 18 years old,
teachers,
school groups,
job seekers, disabled
people, ICOM members,
press.**

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and Saturday
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and associations:**

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