



Robert Cahen «Paisatges»
Reproductibilitat 2.4

Dates: 16.03.18 - 15.04.18

Opening: March 15th, 2018

Curator: Nekane Aramburu

#missionstramuntana

PRESS KIT

**ES BALUARD PRESENTS "ROBERT CAHEN «PAISATGES»
REPRODUCTIBILITAT 2.4", A RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION ON THE
LANDSCAPE IN THE WORK OF THE ARTIST THAT INCLUDES AN
INSTALLATION PRODUCED WITHIN THE PROJECT "MISSIONS
ARTISTIQUES A LA SERRA DE TRAMUNTANA"**

Es Baluard Museu d'Art Modern i Contemporani de Palma presents "Robert Cahen «Paisatges» Reproductibilitat 2.4", a retrospective exhibition on the landscape in the work of the French video creator that includes an unpublished installation produced within the project "Missions artístiques a la Serra de Tramuntana" curated by the museum director, Nekane Aramburu, and which can be visited in the Aljub from March 16 to April 15, 2018.

Continuing with the exhibitions corresponding to the "Reproductibilitat" cycle, Es Baluard proposes a new revision delivery focused on an approach to the analysis of the capture of the landscape, from a retrospective of the Cahen artworks linked to this theme and with an installation produced thanks to the project «Missions artístiques a la Serra de Tramuntana». In addition to the exhibition, in parallel the museum is working on a publication also in co-production between both entities with Nekane Aramburu, Eugeni Bonet and Hou Hanru as authors.

The project is co-organized by Es Baluard and the Consorci Serra de Tramuntana, an entity formed by the Govern de les Illes Balears and the Consell Insular de Mallorca, established after the Declaration of the Serra de Tramuntana as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Also, the show has the collaboration of AICO Servicios Audiovisuales and La Virreina Centre de la Imatge.

Robert Cahen is one of the pioneers of video art that, since the seventies, has been working on the documentary and experimental image, in the first instance, from concrete music to transferring its resources and innovations to the application of the moving image, of analog video to the digital.

"Missions artístiques a la Serra de Tramuntana" is a program that is articulated from days of theoretical nature-practices in coexistence, taking as spaces different points of the Serra de Tramuntana, to work with contemporary artists with the aim of making pedagogy of the cultural heritage open to professional or professional creators interested in the image and movement, photography, video and the relationship of these with the spatio-temporal transits of nature and landscape.

Introduction text by Nekane Aramburu

Learning to look through the pixelated horizon, succumb to its porous atmosphere, like wave magma, like an oscillating curve, a virtual ocean of vertigos, caves and vantage points. Seeking the light between the shadows, and thinking that all things pass.

In the techno-electronic situation of the arts, when hyper-communication and image inflation collapse the panorama of that which is real with the reflection of mirrors that intensify the experience of the gaze, the fact is revealed that video allowed for new ways of seeing and thinking based on time-image.

In its larval, pre-digital origins, we find mechanical registers of happenings or everyday situations. From the beginnings of film and cinema screening with the Lumière brothers, and including the early experiments with video via distortions on TV screens carried out by the pioneers Nam June Paik or Wolf Vostell, formulas arise to transmit the altered real. From then on, the objective register becomes subjective. Travel and landscape are subject and medium.

Thus, after a saturation of films with everyday, familiar stories, the Lumières embarked on sending contributors to unknown countries like Russia, Japan, Morocco, India, Mexico or Spain, and others, with the aim of documenting travels. These travel films, *Travelogues*, are a journey through landscapes and an existential drift. Once recorded, not only were they projected on screens, but also deployed in different exhibition formats, including train carriages themselves. Presented as panoramic views, their effect on the public was to produce even greater fascination than period painting. This fashion of *Travel films* or *Railway films* diluted in around 1907, but their approaches and the influence they had in terms of possibilities for museums and shows such as cinema are still very present today.

A rediscovered classic

Robert Cahen is one of the pioneers of video art, who worked on documental and experimental image since the 'seventies, until transferring his resources and innovations to the application of the moving image, from analogue to digital video. Continuing with the review exhibitions corresponding to the *Reproductibilitat* cycle, Es Baluard proposes a new strategy centred on approaching the analysis of the capturing of landscape based on a retrospective of his worked linked to this subject and a large installation produced thanks to the project "*Missions artistiques a la Serra de Tramuntana*" (Artistic Missions to the Serra de Tramuntana), organised by Es Baluard and the Consorci Serra de Tramuntana (an entity formed by the Govern de les Illes Balears and Consell Insular de Mallorca).

The Serra de Tramuntana mountain range, located in the north-west of the island of Mallorca, was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2011 in the Cultural Landscape category. In 2017, in the mountain refuge of Can Boi, located in the village

of Deia, Robert Cahen and Thierry Maury started a new artistic and experimental training project with some artists, most of them from the Balearic Islands, but also from Iran or Colombia. When conceiving the proposal I considered, from the outset and in dialogue with the people heading up the Consorci, the utility of Robert Cahen's broad experience as a multidisciplinary artist and pioneer in the field of video art. Cahen had carried out projects of this kind all over Latin America, Asia and Europe, and his vision of the landscape is unique and exceptional, enduring and universal. On his long journeys, for years searching urban and natural landscapes from China to the South Pole, he shows us what occurs outside, but also inside the being.

This transcends the pedagogical facet that runs in parallel to his work, and whose main research points are: light, movement and textures. Based on the real image, alongside different contributors he works on their digital editing in the studio. And it is here where new fictions and interpretations of a lyrical and occasionally a narrative nature, always revealing, are made visible. Having refined the image in post-production, it will seem as though its parts contained text in themselves, the experience of a monologue expanded through film signs with an ordering of temporality based on things subjective and autobiographical.

In the project developed in Mallorca, with his peculiar gaze of the nature of the Serra de Tramuntana area, the orography and light, discovered by classical landscapists, is dissected using the empirical methodology of the hike and the planning of different sessions to capture it using video cameras. A route characterised by a dystopian organisation of temporality. The work of this precursor of video art has been recognised, amongst other aspects, for the way it signifies the journey and decodes the layers of reality of the territories to be discovered, near or remote, making them timeless.

As Michel de Montaigne analysed in one of his well-known essays, speaking of "nature": "we are before a system of signs and movements interpreted, firstly, by a creator, whatever their genre, and subsequently by the receiver-spectator".¹

Contemporary creators of Cahen's, along the lines of Raymond Bellour, also use video as a medium to have us enter another time of images, so that those between-the-images come to be a space of virtual transformation between them and us. We may also remember Stan VanDerBeek's *movie murals*, but above all our starting point is the relationship between real time and the film time implicit in moving images.

In *La Region centrale* Michael Snow explored over three hours of continuous camera movement on a mountaintop in Québec. Snow said, "I want to make a gigantic landscape film equal in terms to the great landscape paintings of Cézanne, Poussin, Corot, Monet, Matisse and, in Canada, the Group of Seven".² On this same desire we also find other audiovisual creators, such as Jonas Mekas or Stan Brackage, who have also created a school.

Robert Cahen, in our case, experiments with time by taking it to levels of meta-painting.

Thus, in his work we find sonority and plasticity kinaesthetically merged. His pieces reveal how sound, along with the capturing of the image, is the starting point for a dual formula which Cahen has been combining since his beginnings, in the 'seventies, influenced by his training as a musician. His time with the Groupe de Recherches Musicales at the ORTF and Pierre Schaeffer, and with the Groupe de Recherche Image and the creation of the INA are key to understanding him. With the utilisation from 1979 of the EMS Spectron, the intervals of his frames acquire fresh nuances, the mark of which still lives on today.

The selection of works presented at Es Baluard by way of a retrospective review of his work on the capturing of nature enables us to reflect on the sense of the sequence shot in landscape. The method of his selective gaze, the focus on which he decides to record, imply an exercise of attention, but also a relinquishing, which brings about a succumbing to the beauty of the aesthetics. Sandra Lichi, one of the experts and the main analyst of his film methodology, would say that he configures his work in video as an eternally fresh pictorial work.

When he executes *Horizontales couleurs* (1979) he plays with patterns and the real image evolves in abstract, producing vibrant effects reminiscent of the *op art* painting of Bridget Riley. In the same year - 1979 - Bill Viola develops the piece *Chott el Djerid (A portrait in light and Heat)*, in which he uses telephoto lenses to capture the phenomenon of mirages and to use it to speak of perception, the physical and the psychological.

In video-installation projects, Cahen resolves the expansion of audiovisual process with simple yet effective resources, as in the case of *Paysages-passage* (1997), a work belonging to the FRAC Alsace collection, composed of 18 screens with transparent cases which are lined up to construct a dual curve, presenting alternate images of nature alternating in rhythmic fluctuations which rewrite the landscape.

Suspended or invisible moments in time are some of the situations which habitually appear in his work. They are strange futures grafted in works like *Françoise* (2007) or associated to travel transfers where speed acquires a subjective rhythm of its own. The pieces I have selected for review regarding the landscape point out to us this reversion of that which real and tangible in liquid experiences as fluctuating as they are eternal. *L'éclipse*, 3' (1979), *Trompe-l'oeil*, 7' (1979), *Juste le temps*, 13' (1983), *Cartes postales* (1984-1986), *Montenvers et Mer de glace* (1987), *Dernier adieu* (1988), *Le deuxième jour* (1988), *Chili impressions* (1989), *Hong-Kong Song* (1989), *L'île mystérieuse* (1991), *Voyage d'hiver* (1993), *Sept visions fugitives* (1995), *Corps flottants* (1997), *Le Cercle, Dieu voit tout* (2011), *Entrevoir* (2014) and *Cérémonie* (2015) indicate this to us.

The eternal return of the landscape

As a cultural construction, un landscape is not in itself a reality. When it appears in the history of art, under the name of pictorial genre, around the 16th century, it does so as a consequence of the Protestant Reform, after which time it began to acquire a certain autonomy.

Specialist studies refer to the landscape as an artificial representation, “a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring or symbolising surroundings”.³ Some even say that the *genius loci* is nothing more than the art that inspires the place through our gaze, a gaze that is guilty of the authentic value of the landscape in that it attains more than being an unquestionable physical area.

As the protagonist of romantic painting of the last decades of the 18th century, its importance with symbolic language and the metaphor become significant. For artists like Monet, landscape is a resource for analysing atmospheric effects and giving way to the representation of subjective impressions linked to it. Cézanne was interested in its total integrity.

Robert Cahen's current work challenges spectators from the perspective and the construction in and with displacement. Contemplating its digital translocation is as revealing as that a traditional, static painting may offer us, circumscribed in a frame. It is a universal scene, which can be exchanged between regions and frontiers, a gaze with an Asian influence that brings us closer both to the Chinese theory of painting and to the pictorial interpretation of everyday life, the avant-garde precepts of impressionism or abstraction. The treatment of colour, the systems of perception and time expanded as an instrument for portraying things real are key pillars on which the construction of the exercise rests which has been performed in selected places of the Serra de Tramuntana mountains. A part of an island in the Mediterranean, with an orography similar to that of its other islands, united by the atmosphere of gentle contrasts, winds and shared waters.

Accepting that what we have before us, as nature, is a social, cultural and aesthetical construct, its mirror is a field dilated in subjectivity. The mutation of the state of the landscape shows that unforeseeable chance challenges the hunter of the sequence shot and pulls him to the vertigo of the sublime.

Whereas filming painting in movement was one of the challenges we set ourselves in the Mallorca project, speaking of video-landscape as an essay helps us to contribute to analysing a genre that has hardly been researched since contemporary times.

Life is present and allows time past to be restored. The sequence shot is a resource and a trick for amplifying the time of the gaze towards the vastness of the horizon, which measures us with it and asks us what and where we are. The partition of the screens in his installation in the exhibition room, the planning of the assisted viewpoint.

“There is no individual, there is no species. Only the highs and lows of intensity”, wrote Nietzsche in *The Gay Science*. Perhaps only light serves in its nuances to identify those leaps of situations and locate us in each moment from our strength and our fragility.

Lights and vibrations, essay for the painting in movement is the installation resulting from the specific production for the *Missions a la Serra de Tramuntana* project, which peers into this abyss of contrasts. We may think that through this installation, we transit all the aesthetical schools and philosophies on the history of landscape.

And the gestures of contemporary artists like John Cage, who in turn influenced creators of *land art* such as Robert Morris, Walter de Maria, Robert Smithson or Richard Long, convey a new power over the landscape to movement, dematerialisation and that which is conceptual. In the audiovisual drift, the force of the creator is in the relation between time lived, time captured and time handed over to the spectator.

In addition to this is the fact that both natural material and the spectator are subjected to a continuous dynamic of displacement. In his introduction to the book *La mouvance*, Augustin Berque already spoke of that which is mobile as intrinsically related to the landscape.

We know that the state of nature is temporary, and even dramatically unpredictable, heading towards the change in the planet's climate. Thus, introducing the indeterminacy of form and the appropriation of the immaterial as an agent reveals new processes over which the contemporary creator has an influence and acquires the responsibility of perpetuation. With his work, Robert Cahen bestows new value on his time.

Moreover, Cahen's approach shapes a certain contemporary tribute to the sense of the sublime. That reference, established in the subconscious of every human being awestruck by beauty, integrates into it referentially.

We are the scale that gives the proportion, like those characters of Caspar David Friedrich, spectators and subjects.

That which is sublime of the romantic painters of northern Europe transmutes; Cahen renews the genre of landscape without emotional distance. It is a kind of aesthetics of the sublime that is closer to Kant than to Schiller. He glories in manipulating the setback, the challenge of the storm, the untimeliness of a light which was not the desired one, the difficulties of displacement as the day progresses and turns it into an exercise in the history of landscapist art. A deconstruction through the possibilities of spaces that can be exchanged, resulting in the moment, and experiment in the digital laboratory and the real space.

¹ Montaigne, "Sur des vers de Virgile", *Essais III*, 5, quoted in: Alain Roger, *Breve tratado del paisaje*, Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid, 2007 (1^a ed. 1997), p. 21.

² Cornwell, Regina, *Snow Seen: The films and Photographs of Michael Snow*, Peter Martin Associates, Toronto, 1980, p. 117.

³ Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (pub.), *The iconography of landscape*, Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography, Avon, Cambridge University Press, 1989, 2nd ed. (1st ed. 1988), p. 1.

The Cahen Express by Eugeni Bonet

Travel, passage, landscape and portrait are concepts that link and describe Robert Cahen's work. Like recurring elementary particles, keywords or tags, they can often be found in the very titles of his pieces, exhibitions and retrospective shows, albeit sometimes expressed in other terms.

On his travels, Cahen picks up and brings back (or sends back: his first frame has often been a television screen) postcards or vignettes with flashes of movement, impressions and logs of journeys, songs and fleeting perceptions: *Cartes postales vidéo*, *Chili-impressions*, *Hong Kong Song*, *Blind Song*, *Sept visions fugitives*.

The notion of passage also entails a crossing, the passing of time (and time as a raw material), all the things thrown up by intervals of time as they are glimpsed, sensed, half-heard and intertwined in suspended, floating time: *L'entr'aperçu*, *Juste le temps*, *Traverses*, *La Traversée du rail*, *L'Entre*, *Entrevoir*.

The landscape is a constant motif or background, overlaid with others, especially travel, as expressed in the *Paysages/Passage(s)* duality in several of his titles or epigraphs. Moreover, the landscape also implies a generic description of not only a physical, natural or urban geography but also a human one as well.

Finally, the idea of portrait is often implicit in works with titles containing proper names—from *Karine* to the pieces that refer to Françoise, the elder sister he bid farewell to as she slipped away, or to composer and conductor Pierre Boulez—as well as in the idea of *anonyme singulier*, to use an expression coined by Michel Chion: any inhabitant of the world, any encounter with otherness.

Cahen trained as a musician and composer. After learning to play the piano and other keyboard instruments, he was drawn towards *musique concrète* on the courses offered by the GRM (Groupe de Recherches Musicales), led by Pierre Schaeffer under the auspices of the Conservatoire national supérieur de musique in Paris.

Cahen's early films and videos are the work of a musician, albeit one with a flair for visual music. At the Service de la Recherche at the ORTF (French broadcasting corporation), set up around the GRM, he came into contact with other groups and departments who were working with images and experimenting with different techniques—an experience that helped the young Cahen move from one place to another, eager to explore neighbouring compartments. In doing so, he discovered that he could apply everything he had learnt about *musique concrète* to film simply by swapping musical instruments for other kinds of keyboards that let him record, edit, mix, manipulate, add effects and the like.

His interest in film was also nourished by a cinematic streak in his family—his father set up the first film club in the Alsace region—and really took off when he moved to Paris, city of light and cinema par excellence.

Throughout the 1970s, Cahen made a number of films in a wide range of different formats, based mainly on animating his own or other people's photographic images by using an animation stand and employing sleights of hand while editing. These originally static images became building blocks for structuring time, creating rhythms and sequences—a term with its own musical connotations—and achieving the idea of “the

restless photo" (*la photo qui bouge*), an idea he also approached from the other direction by slowing down—and even completely freezing—moving images: thus capturing the apparent, illusory movement that lies at the very heart of cinema. A clear example was when he filmed the arrival of a train with a high-speed camera to stretch out the time of the shot (giving us time to identify the train in question, whether by chance or design, as the Caen express!)

Cahen has also readily explored all manner of different electronic devices he has come across. The Truqueur Universel, by engineer François Coupigny, who also created a sound synthesis module that formed part of GRM's repertoire of instruments, was used in the evocatively titled *L'invitation au voyage* (1973) to process, solarise and colourise a series of film images—reflections on water, train journeys, locations and glimpsed horizons—that recall the legacy of pure, integral, abstract (or at least abstracted *concrète*) filmmaking of the kind made in France by Dulac, Chomette and Mitry.

Later came the EMS Spectron, a video synthesiser created by Richard Monkhouse and used in several films from 1977 to 1982, including *Horizontales couleurs* (1979)—Cahen's only foray into absolute abstraction—and *L'entr'aperçu* (1980). And the most characteristic effects of this device - of patterns or striations - have been emulated in a more recent work, too: *L'Entre* (2014), with explicit echoes of the previous title in this one.

In *Artmatic* (1980), Cahen explored an incipient version of a computing system developed by Jean-François Colonna at the École Polytechnique in Paris, in a trial that was a precursor of the digitalization of images referring to chronophotography as an anticipation by the filmmaker; and thus, yet another manifestation of the intersection between the fixed image and the cinematographic one

Around 1980, Cahen's audiovisual work began to become more narrative in shape, full of gliding, dreamlike images somewhere between wakefulness and sleep. This is prefigured in *Arrêt sur marche* (1979), a short film in 35mm which constitutes an entire islet in the ensemble of his work, and in the enchantment of *L'entr'aperçu*, based on visual and audio motifs that regress and intermingle.

Furthermore, although Cahen originally created the sound for his audiovisual work himself, sometimes in partnership with likeminded colleagues, from the early 1980s onwards he delegated the job of composing or sound design to others: Michel Chion and, more recently, Francisco Ruiz de Infante, as well as occasional contributions from other electroacoustic composers.

The peak of this crossover—this passage between music and image, photo (or film frame) and electronic imagery, the specific and the abstract—came with *Juste le temps* (1983), which brought together many of the tropes, motifs and procedures he had introduced, tested and perfected during his formative years. It includes a train journey and the dualities of inside/outside, visible/glimpsed. The images are slowed down—producing modulated time, stretched and contracted at will—and processed by different means: striking colours, landscapes swept over first by the speed of the motion and then by an oscillographic readout of the electronic raster of the images (following a similar principle to the Rutt/Etra video synthesiser used by Nam June Paik, Vasulka and Gary Hill, among others). And there is a sigh of fiction and narrative quality which was already latent after the first *invitation au voyage* of ten years earlier.

Jean-Paul Fargier has taken this work by Cahen as one of the paradigms of the passage *de la trame au drame* in the video from the 'eighties: from the electronic weft of the images (comprised of continuously-flowing dots, lines, fields and squares) to the narrative and dramaturgical weft of an emerging video-fiction which, like science fiction, would have characteristics of its own. Sandra Lischi, the greatest specialist in Cahen's work, added the notion of suspense as a consequence of the meeting of two characters on a train (the umpteenth variation of *boy meets girl*) where actually nothing really happens, except for the passage of time. Because as the creator himself said, rather than a fiction, this is a "fiction embryo".

His subsequent career has taken him through a wide range of different terrains. He worked closely with the Ina (Institut national de l'audiovisuel), the successor to the Service de la Recherche at the ORTF, and was much in demand at other centres, museums and television channels. Many of the resulting works could be said to be fruit of a carefully struck balance between his own ideas and commissions from others. And thanks to his keen desire to work with other artists and share and forge creative ties with creators working in all kinds of other disciplines, he sought out or found partnerships with choreographers (Hideyuki Yano, Susan Buirge, Bernardo Montet); explored the work of composers, musicians and environments such as Pierre Boulez, IRCAM and GRM; and made documentary projects on museums, collections, exhibitions and artists, together with others on a range of subjects encompassing theatre, architecture and film – always with a unique, innovative and bold seal (for example, by not even showing that which would be most evident in relation to the subject being dealt with).

In addition, travel has become a theme, subject matter and practically its own genre for Cahen. In the same way that we talk of travel literature, we should also think of travel as an audiovisual genre above and beyond the commonplaces of documentary travelogues. At first he travelled light, but his later trips took on an almost transcendental quality, so to speak. The very experience of moving, of going from one place to another and then returning to the starting point is an example of *voyager/retrouver*, according to one of the dualities Cahen likes to use. In fact, this is what he has always done (including the techniques and effects he uses): setting off in search of nothing in particular, and leaving himself open to being surprised by whatever he might find.

These lightweight pieces include *Cartes postales vidéo* (1984-1986), a joint project with Stéphane Huter and Alain Longuet that comprised a series of 30-second capsules designed to fill continuity gaps in television programming with archetypal images and iconic souvenirs of a wide range of places, cities, monuments, landscapes and picturesque details. For a moment, these captured images buzz with movement and burst with sound. He took the tourist trail in *Montenvers et Mer de Glace* (1987, again together with Huter) on a track railway, with visual and aural echoes of the intrigues of Hitchcock/Herrmann and the comic timing of Tati and Chaplin.

Cahen's love for travel has also grown thanks to his involvement with various international events, festivals and crosscutting projects. Indeed, the increasing worldwide acclaim for his work led to his urban symphonies, in a *concrète* vein, to New York (*Le deuxième jour*, 1988, with music by Zorn) and *Hong Kong Song* (1989, in collaboration with Ermeline Le Mézo), his impressions of Chile and the mysterious Easter Island (1989 and 1990) and his magical evocation of the Luminara festivities in Pisa, when the Tuscan city is filled with the light and the smell of wax candles and oil lamps (*La notte delle bugie*, 1993).

Next, the idea of a transcendental journey could be extended to his travels to distant lands and cultures, extreme places and wild landscapes, and his encounters with otherness. It can be seen in his journeys to the Antarctic (*Voyage d'hiver*, 1993, with Angela Riesco; *Paysages d'hiver*, 2005) and the Arctic (*Le cercle*, 2005); his repeated trips to the Far East: China (*Sept visions fugitives*, 1995; *Canton la chinoise*, 2001, with Rob Rombout; *Red Memory*, 2010, with John Borst, among others), Vietnam (*Plus loin que la nuit*, 2005; *Blind Song*, 2008) and Japan (*Corps flottants*, 1997); and his travels to Yemen (*Sanaa, passages en noir*, 2007), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (*Dieu voit tout*, 2011) and Georgia (*Ceremonies*, 2015).

Cahen's audiovisual work has almost always been firmly rooted in the image. There is little room for words in his pieces, unless the subject or premise calls for them or he feels like breaking his usual moulds (*Corps flottants*, *Canton la chinoise*, *Dieu voit tout*).

He believes in the idea that images can speak for themselves through their own eloquence and ductility. In other words, strength on the one hand, stretching or slowing down on the other. Cahen's images are very beautiful but never sickly. His imagist journeys are not exotic reports designed merely to pass the time and see the world through the window of the screen. He aims to shine a light on this world shared by all those who live in it and pass through it, or, in his words, "to translate into images and meanings the deep, beautiful but terrible emotions that underpin existence".

Although his use of slowed-down images has become one of his hallmarks, he stresses that he uses this technique to make his images not more beautiful, but more visible, more present, by eschewing any trace of sentimentality. Another fundamental aspect is the interval—pause, time for rest and sedimentation—that passes once he has captured his images, on his way back from his trip or expedition, so that they can be prepared, organised and processed with the condiments of editing, effects (including subtraction) and sound (or silence).

In 1997 the exhibition *Robert Cahen s'installe* (Frac Alsace, Sélestat) gave his career a fresh twist. Its playful title alluded to both his return to the region where he grew up, after many years based in Paris, and the fact he was presenting a set of video installations that would forge a new path ahead. Although he had previously made occasional pieces in this vein, from the mid-1990s onwards this focus became increasingly central to his work.

Cahen's early installations were very much in the style of the time—lots of monitors, sculptural components, props—and often featured different ways of presenting and viewing some of his creations in single-channel format and for what we used to call the small screen.

Later, though, in the new millennium, the generic conception of installations and *projected media*, or whatever other name they might go by (the terms "screen art", "cinema of exhibition" and "loop" were all suddenly very much in vogue), have led to a global shift towards a more stripped-down look. In Cahen's work, this has translated into a succession of pieces that frequently take the form of a silent or sound projection in a continuous loop, sometimes on twin screens, framed (literally or conceptually), turned on their side (in terms of the image aspect ratio) and projected onto a specific material or screen-device, etc. The projection(s) and other components, media and machinery are always carefully arranged in accordance with the space-box where they are being exhibited.

Which brings us back to the concepts set out at the start of the journey: travel, passage, landscape and portrait. Sometimes as clippings of crossings and choreographies found in populous China (*Vélochine*, 2007; *La Traversée du rail*, 2014) or as portraits at the crossroads between stillness and movement (*Françoise and Portraits*, 2013); other times as explorations of landscapes (*Entrevoir*, 2014; *Paysages de Chine*, 2009, a compilation of images looking back at his various trips to China) and the transcendentalism exuded by these video impressions, which in turn become, to use Brakhage's phrase, "metaphors on vision" and take on a metaphysical air in the vaporous images in *Traverses* (2002), in which a succession of people of different ages emerge out of a white fog and slowly walk forwards until they vanish back into it in an eternal passage of time.

WORKS OF ART

1. Videographic - Retrospective

Trompe-l'oeil

1979

Video, colour, sound

Duration: 5' 58"

In the film *Amarcord* by Federico Fellini, a packet boat emerges from water like a mysterious monster in the middle of the night and the fog. This video work is inspired by that idea of an unreal "passage" and plays with the spectacular surprise it reveals.

L'éclipse

1979

Video, colour, sound

Duration: 3'

Experimental use of the Spectron

A sun appears and disappears between the patterns generated by the experimental use of the Spectron on a background of '20s jazz music.

Juste le temps

1983

Video, colour, sound

Duration: 12' 40"

Score: Michel Chion

"The video sets forth the parenthesis of a travel moment when the transformed landscapes become actors in their own right in a story that tells of the possible encounter of two beings. The limits between the exterior and interior landscape, between sleep and wakefulness, between noises and silence, and even between the characters, diminish to the point of fading away. The notion of passage, so well-illustrated by the train journey, impregnates the whole story" (Sandra Lischi, *Il respiro dei Tempo*, ETS, 1995)

Cartes postales vidéo

1984-1986

Video, colour, sound

Duration: 225'. Fragment exhibited at Es Baluard: 10' 19''

Co-Directors: Stéphane Huter, Alain Longuet

Described by the artist himself as "30 seconds of dreams". *Cartes postales vidéo* is a version inspired by the typical tourist trips. This work was produced in Paris, New York, Rome, Quebec, Iceland, Lisbon, Cairo, Algeria and other parts of the world. The more than 450 iconic images of these cities are captured like traditional postcards and frozen in time. The postcards suddenly take on life for a fleeting moment. By exploring the frozen frame of the postcard, Cahen provides a subtle vision of the transitory nature of reality. On his path, Cahen invites spectators on a perceptual journey through the currents of memory, emotion and reflection.

Montenvers et Mer de glace

1987

Video, colour, sound

Duration: 8' 57"

Co-Director: Stéphane Huter

A tribute to the films of Jacques Tati which combine fiction and video art with humour. The work was produced as part of the international project *Time Code*, in which Cahen and Huter had to capture the spirit, the reality and the pulsations of a place, with no dialogue and without making any comments. In this curious, capricious travel diary of tourists in the French Alps, the artists play with electronic and cinematographic codes, manipulating image, sound and time like malleable materials.

Dernier adieu

1988

Video, colour, sound

Duration: 8'

Music: Olivier Messian

The photographer J. M. Tingaud takes photos of the sea. On the day of the summer solstice of 1990, twelve bottles, each one containing an original photograph by J.M. Tingaud, are thrown into twelve seas and oceans around the planet. Robert Cahen takes us through the solitude of these giant oceans, with a certain solitude.

Le deuxième jour

1988

Video, colour, sound

Duration: 8' 39"

Score inspired on a musical fragment by John Zorn, *Tribute to Godard*

The images are constructed and composed on the basis of an extract from the music of John Zoren, in a tribute to Jean-Luc Godard. The discontinuous rhythm of the music leads the montage of the film on a succession of swift shots, about a young Chinese woman who passes through the city of New York. Robert Cahen offers us a vision of the city inspired by the music through rhythm, colour and movement.

Chili impressions

1989

Video 8, colour, sound

Duration: 13' 01"

Directors: Robert Cahen with the collaboration of Ermeline Le Mézo

Music, score: Ermeline Le Mézo

Excerpts from *Canto general* by Pablo Neruda

"The film is the travel diary kept by Robert Cahen during his stay in Chile in 1987. The pages of a paper notebook are superposed on one another, the images, superimposed, appear to emerge from behind the memory: the wind, the river, the rails, the journey never stops and goes back even further, to the exquisite vibration of sensitivity touched by the simple power of a few ephemeral scenes that suddenly say the significance of the place, the place of this world", (Apert).

Hong-Kong Song

1989

Video, colour, sound

Duration: 20' 47"

with the collaboration of: Ermeline Le Mézo

Robert Cahen describes *Hong Kong Song* as an exploration of "the sonic identity of Hong Kong, its space and its architecture. Modern China fuses with ancient China, the reality of this city rings out and reverberates from image to image, revealing a multifaceted vision". This work shows the frenzied urban paces of Hong Kong, its people and its natural surroundings through a synergy of time and space, aural and visual textures.

L'île mystérieuse

1991

Video, colour, sound

Duration: 15' 50"

Music: Cécile Le Prado, Ermeline Le Mézo

Lost in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, the mysterious island trembles gently as though in the dawn of humanity, penetrated by the light and colours: on it, a group of children organise themselves like the first inhabitants of the island.

Voyage d'hiver

1993

Video, colour, sound

Duration: 18' 04"

Collaboration: Angela Riesco

Music: Christine Grout. Sound design: Robert Cahen

On a trip to the Antarctic, the director filmed glacier landscapes, blocks of bluish ice floating in the sea alongside images of ghost ships and mysterious flashes of people, more like apparitions than human beings. Thanks to post-production and digital editing, these images turn into a new universe, an abstract and often disturbing one.

Sept visions fugitives

1995

Video, colour, sound

Duration: 31' 47"

Sound conception: Michel Chion

"The ephemeral fascinates us; it sometimes reopens a wound and speaks a kind of truth", Jo Attié.

Robert Cahen addresses this idea of landscape, in which seven short poems are written in image, fleeting visions of a China perceived, glimpsed, heard, always in movement, half understood, always in movement.

Corps flottants

1997

Video, colour, sound

Duration: 13' 01"

Sound conception: Michel Chion

A Japan trapped in time, men and women tied to their land, bodies floating in the water of a thermal spring. The film is inspired by the indications and comments of Kenzo, the main character of *Grass on the Wayside*, the last novel by the Japanese writer Natsume Soseki, published in 1916.

Le Cercle

2005

Video, colour, silent

Duration: 10' 18"

"Svalbard is an archipelago in the far north of the Arctic, a meeting point between here and elsewhere, still familiar, and yet already disturbing, a gateway to the unknown. It marks the end of the universe of our senses: beyond lies the abstraction of unchanging stretches of ice. The colour blue in Robert Cahen's film - the colour of cold and loneliness - and the slow-moving landscapes against which one witnesses the flight of birds and the movement of men prepared to confront the mysteries of this unique land are in harmony with its mesmerizing sense of desolation. Svalbard imposes its law on all those who come there. It is a law of confined space, to be explored, understood and acknowledged." (Daniel Baillon).

Dieu voit tout

2011

Video, colour, sound

Duration: 11'

Work inspired on a poem by Patrick Mudekereza

An experimental video based on a poem by the African artist and writer Patrick Mudékéréza. In the film the young people of Katanga, the southernmost province of the Democratic Republic of Congo, recite one of his poems.

Cérémonies

2015

Video, colour, sound

Duration: 8' 30"

Music and sound design: Nicolas Vérin

Coming close and touching human history for just a moment is enough to remind us of the fragility, the beauty of existence, the importance of ceremonies and the force of nature.

2. Entrevoir

Entrevoir

2014

Video, colour, sound

Duration: 18'

Sound conception: Francisco Ruiz de Infante

Comprised of panoramic shots of landscapes (forests, fields, etc.) this work invites spectators to immerse themselves in nature whilst keeping them at a distance thanks to the parenthesis between the two projections. The soundtrack of the installation, produced in collaboration with Francisco Ruiz de Infante and based on Bergman's *Wild Strawberries*, joins the mystery and melancholy that emanates from this "crossroads" of the landscape, at the same time as it includes a fictional and narrative dimension.

3. Installation

Serra de Tramuntana. Lights and vibrations, essay for the painting in movement

2018

Video installation, three projections, colour, sound, loop

Duration: 12'

BIOGRAPHIES

Robert Cahen

The French creator Robert Cahen (1945) is one of the most representative artists in terms of the moving image and / or video image for capturing the landscape. His experience executing projects of this kind throughout Latin America, Asia and Europe make his perspective on the landscape unique and exceptional, to the point of converting it into something transcendental.

He is also one of the pioneers of art history in the disciplines of video and the documental and experimental image. On the pedagogical side, his key research points are light, movement and textures. Based on the real image, he creates interpretations generating new fictions and interpretations of a poetical nature, and even a narrative one on occasions, in a way that nobody else achieves.

A retrospective of his work was held in Spain at the Museo Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (1999). Moreover, his work was recently acknowledged by the Centro La Virreina, under the curatorship of Eugeni Bonet.

Nekane Aramburu

Director of Es Baluard museum and a recognized manager and independent curator specialized among other aspects in the evolution of the image and video art. Among its most recognized projects in this area are: "Frágil. CCE/Montevidéo" 2009, "B sides of Spanish videoarte". Berlin/ Dakar/Bangkok / Seul/ Sidney/ Praga 2011-2014; "Palabras corrientes". Instituto Cervantes Nueva York y Pekín 2006, "Todo cuanto amé...", Damasco / Dublín / Bruselas 2007-2010, "BlueSky". Fundación Telefónica de Buenos Aires 2009, "Bluesky". Fundación Telefónica Buenos Aires 2010, "Epílogo". PhotoEspaña/Instituto Cervantes. Madrid 2010, "La Rabia fundadora" Lima 2012, "Aguas turbulentas- Eaux Agitées", "GAUR (sic)". Londres/Managua/Costa Rica/Honduras/Cordoba- Argentina/Santiago de Chile, among others.

As an editor and researcher we can find the publications: *Historia del Videoarte en el Estado español* (Fundación Arte y Derecho, 2009) / *Caras B del Videoarte en España* (junto a Carlos T. Mori) AECID. Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación (2011), *Museos, centros de arte y espacios híbridos*. Fundación Gilberto Alzate de Bogotá. (2012), o *Digital Narratives and Image Technologies*. Ministerio de Cultura/Casa Asia (2011) in addition to monographs of different national and international artists.

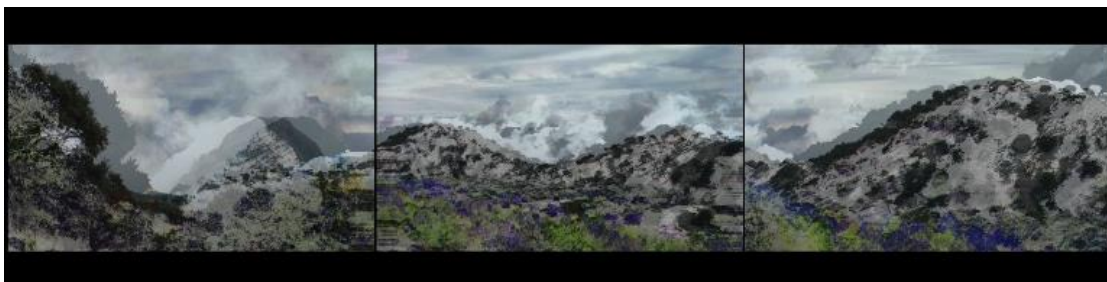
Eugeni Bonet

Eugeni Bonet (Barcelona, 1954) plays several keys in video, film and digital media. Since the seventies, its activity has developed between reflection and practice, and between the framework of the visual arts and those of the moving image.

His work of creation extends from the films and pieces of multiple projections of the seventies the feature films *Tira tú reloj al agua (Variaciones sobre una cinegrafía intuitiva de José Val del Omar)* (2003-2004) y *Egolem* (in process), the latter also conceived for a future online version. He alternates these projects with other executions faster and in short formats, often from images found and recycled.

Co-author of two books that became reference works, *En torno al vídeo* (1980, with reprints in 1984 and 2010) and *Práctica filmica y vanguardia artística en España, 1925-1981* (1983, and with next revised reissue), he has also compiled as an editor the various catalogs of audiovisual exhibitions and programming - many of which are itinerant - that he has curated for several museums, centers and events.

IMAGE CREDITS



Robert Cahen, *Serra de Tramuntana. Lights and vibrations, essay for the painting in movement*, 2018 (video still). Video installation, three projections, colour, sound, loop. Duration: 12'. Collection of the artist © of the work of art, Robert Cahen, 2018



Robert Cahen, *Sept visions fugitives*, 1995 (video still). Video, colour, sound. Duration: 31' 47''. Collection of the artist © of the work of art, Robert Cahen, 2018



Robert Cahen, *Voyage d'hiver*, 1993 (video still). Video, colour, sound. Duration: 18' 04''.
Collection of the artist © of the work of art, Robert Cahen, 2018

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[LA VIRREINA]
CENTRE DE LA IMATGE

The **Consorci Serra de Tramuntana - Patrimoni Mundial** is a public entity formed by the Govern de les Illes Balears and the Consell Insular de Mallorca, and its aims are defined in the statutes published in the BOIB day 19.04.2011, and are derived of the Declaration of the Serra de Tramuntana as a World Heritage of UNESCO.

Aico Servicios Audiovisuales is an audiovisual services company specializing in facilities imaging and professional sound (with LED screens art) and offers simultaneous translation services for events, conference and videoconference, televoting, recording and post-production, realization direct and scenery. One of those companies capable of turning an event to use into an entire experience.

The **Virreina Center de la Imatge** is the public museum institution, with a program dedicated to contemporary art, the oldest in Barcelona. Located in an urban enclave of high density against the Ramblas and as a passage to the Raval, a neighborhood with a strong associative and tradition, cultural policy in recent years has focused on exploring the ideological and aesthetic uses of images. Among his latest exhibitions include those made on Alexander Kluge, Paula Rego, Ketty The Rock, Robert Cahen, Copi and Patrick Faigenbaum.

Es Baluard Museu d'Art Modern i Contemporani de Palma

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