

SIMON STARLING RED RIVERS

29 january - 6 march 2010

As part of the "Berlin-Paris" exchange with the neugerriemschneider gallery, Kamel Mennour is pleased to present *Red Rivers*, a solo exhibition by the Scottish artist Simon Starling.

Over fifteen years, Simon Starling has developed a body of work as magical as it is unusual. Described as being concerned both with context and process, his work concentrates on activity - the twin of artistic creation - and not on the unique production of an object for display. One cannot fail to notice this reversal. For if, in general, the end justifies the means, with Simon Starling it is the means that justify the end. Yet even in this inverted situation the finished object is not neglected. It acquires the power of a clue, a trace, a narrative framework. Thus a singular and unusual method of producing art unfolds.

Each of this artist's poetic protocols is digressive, perhaps even romantic. The works resemble contemporary tales derived directly from real life and rooted in history. Each project literally engages with whole sections of more or less forgotten history, with the aim of prolonging them, compiling them and mixing them with our world, here and now.

As it happens, the two works on show at galerie kamel mennour are emblematic of this invitation on a poetic voyage.

Entitled *Three Birds, Seven Stories, Interpolation and Bifurcations*, the photographic series displayed in the first gallery is based on a collection of real and fictional variations on the same story, that of the German architect Eckart Muthesius. Having entered the service of the young maharaja Yeswant Rao Holkar (1908-1961), he was given the task of building him an extraordinary palace, a Gesamtkunstwerk, at the then cutting edge of design and technology. With a complex chemistry, the variation of images on show presents a web of places and destinies; a universe that despite being real, reminds us of that of Jorge Luis Borges, a universe where Constantin Brancusi, Fritz Lang, Marcel Breuer and Le Corbusier collide, and where Germany, Italy and India resonate in unison.

Produced last year and displayed in the second gallery, the film *Red Rivers (in the Search of the Elusive Okapi)* brings together the accounts of two journeys exactly a century apart. In 1909, zoologist and photographer Herbert Lang took part in an exhibition to the Congo, organised by the Museum of Natural History in New York. Documented using glass plate photographs, this excursion became the artist's starting point for a project requiring three years of research. In effect, thanks to these pictures, which showed a living Okapi for the first time, and through the construction of a highly improbable canoe (by virtue of its mixture of contradictory materials: walnut and grey strips of hide that replicate the coat of an Okapi) inspired by traditional American Indians vessels, Starling superimposes time and cultures with a masterful art of confluence. After a seven-day voyage across more than 250 kilometres from North Adam (Massachusetts) to New York, he placed his canoe on the front steps of the Museum of Natural History, so that it might take its place alongside Lang's Okapi Diorama.

John Cornu

Winner of the 2005 Turner Prize, Simon Starling was born in 1967 in Epsom (Surrey). He currently lives and works in Copenhagen (Denmark).

His work has been shown as part of numerous solo and group exhibitions throughout the world: at the MassMOCA in North Adams (USA), at Berlin's Kunsthalle, Glasgow's Modern Institute, the Wiels in Brussels; at the Fundaci  Joan Miro in Barcelona, at the UCLA Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney (Australia), at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis (USA), at Tate Britain in London, at Stockholm's Moderna Museet, at the Moore Building in Miami (USA), at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, and at De Appel, Amsterdam; as well as at several biennales such as the 50th Venice Biennale, the Lyon Contemporary Art Biennale, the Sharjah Biennale (United Arab Emirates), the Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art, and the Sao Paulo Biennale (Brazil).

In addition, last autumn he held solo exhibitions at the MAC/VAL (Vitry-sur-Seine) and at the Parc Saint L ger Contemporary Art Centre (Pougues-les-Eaux).

Simon Starling «Red Rivers» is on show at galerie kamel mennour Tuesdays to Saturdays, 9am to 7pm.

For further information, please contact Jessy Mansuy-Leydier, Marie-Sophie Eich , and Emma-Charlotte Gobry-Laurencin.