

# 13<sup>TH</sup> BIENNALE DE LYON

## “LA VIE MODERNE”



### 13<sup>th</sup> Biennale de Lyon

10 sept 2015 › 3 janv 2016

Previews: 8-9 sept

Artistic director: **Thierry Raspail**

Guest curator: **Ralph Rugoff**

Since its creation in 1991, Thierry Raspail, artistic director of la Biennale de Lyon, has been inviting each guest curator to reflect on a word spanning three editions. La Biennale 2015 will start a new trilogy with the word "modern", a word that Thierry Raspail gave to Ralph Rugoff, curator of the 2015 edition.

Ralph Rugoff answers to this term with a title for 2015: *La vie moderne*. Below are his first thoughts on "modern".

### *La vie moderne*

The Biennale, titled *La vie moderne* will bring together artists who explore the contradictory and contingent character of the modern project as it has unfolded in different parts of the world, from aesthetics and philosophy to social formations, subjectivity, and technology. Their artwork will reflect current and ongoing changes to our scenarios of "everyday life" and the ways of thinking and seeing that accompany them. The Biennale will definitely not comprise an interrogation of classic Modernism (it seems to me that that is a dead horse that has already been beaten enough).

There is (unavoidably) an ironic dimension to this title *La vie moderne*, in large part because the word "modern" has come to seem slightly anachronistic. The notion of "the modern world" is now something like a period piece, a historical relic from another century. Indeed, the word – or the idea of "modern" - has been so thoroughly deconstructed, critiqued, trashed and dulled by repetition, that it's become a caricature of its former self. Yet we can't quite get rid of it, or leave it in peace. Someone is always re-branding "modern". Today we traffic in a kind of zombie modernism - every time we think that we have killed it off, it comes back to confront us in a different modality, with an alternate agenda. (It seems to me

that while post-modern died an ugly death, the modern continues on in a kind of a half-life state).

In common parlance, of course, the word "modern" is still used to denote "new", but it now carries with it the shadow of other meanings, as we are more and more conscious of a long and complex history of various modern traditions – in art, architecture, politics, pop music, etc. So to say something is "modern", at this point, imbues it with an aura of uncertainty.

I think this is a positive development, as the classic "modern" of the 20<sup>th</sup> century often concealed its contradictory character, including its problematic but profound links to the non-modern. (Think of how the modern architecture of Le Corbusier was born, in part, from his encounter with the stucco architecture of Algerian villages). What we used to think of as "modern" was at the same time intricately connected to the histories and cultures of colonized territories in Africa, refugees from peripheral countries in Europe, etc. "Modern", in other words, was never a test tube creation. Nor was it ever a static concept. So I hope a discussion today of "modern" can illuminate how this concept continues to grow and evolve, to develop new layers and nuances, and to incessantly repair itself as it adapts to changing contexts,

Finally, for me, perhaps the crucial historical dimension of "modern" that remains today is the impulse to question – not to get mired in self-questioning or to resort to scepticism as a universal default setting, but to continually question the new "normal", to re-examine and investigate our relationships with each other, with our images, the world around us, changing technologies, etc.

Ralph Rugoff, September 2014



# MODERN #1

## FIRST SESSION AROUND "MODERN"

Co-organised by mac<sup>LYON</sup> and La Biennale de Lyon

**Thierry Raspail has invited Thomas Boutoux and François Piron, of the castillo/corrales venue to discuss the term "modern":**

Thomas Boutoux and François Piron have given the title "Moody" to this session, in which they look into the part played by humour in artists' vocabulary.

They have invited a number of artists, art critics, writers and theoreticians, including Camille Blatrix (artist) and Clara Schulmann (art critic).

*Programme and guest list in progress.*

### Wed 19 Nov 2014

The session will be in two parts, including talks, discussions and screenings of excerpts from the films being discussed:

3:30 – 5:30 pm in the lecture theatre at the **Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Lyon (ENSBA)**

6:30 – 8:30 pm in the **mac<sup>LYON</sup> lecture theatre**

Admission free

Advance booking recommended – tel. mac<sup>LYON</sup>: 04 72 69 17 19, [publics@mac-lyon.com](mailto:publics@mac-lyon.com)

*In partnership with the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Lyon (ENSBA)*

### "Moody" by castillo/corrales

As Ralph Rugoff has suggested, over time the concept of "modern" has, so to speak, become increasingly imprecise. Today it refers less to an era, a style or a zeitgeist than to a feeling, an intuition that something is modern. The term thus has to be resituated through an exploration of what may underlie this feeling and the way it fits with our time.

This relationship between emotion, states of mind and the contemporary era is a core concern in the art field today and the subject of the "Moody" seminar organised by castillo/corrales at the invitation of the Lyon Biennial.

For the present generation of artists the question of emotion – or more exactly of mood – seems once again a point of focus, but less as a subject than as a creative dynamic. Unlike feeling as an external projection of inwardness, mood is a change within the individual receptive to his surroundings, the product of an attentive awareness of the world. Moods are an operative force in today's artworks, in terms not of atmosphere or expressiveness, but of a direct confrontation with the viewer embodied in stances, attitudes and specific forms of sociality.

castillo/corrales is an independent art space created in 2007, with a programme designed by a collective of artists, exhibition curators, art critics and graphic designers. This new kind of art institution provides Paris with an innovative venue for creating, discussing and experiencing art, at the junction between the French and the international scenes.

castillo/corrales also functions as a curatorial collective and has organised exhibitions including L'époque, les valeurs, les humeurs, l'attention, the 16<sup>th</sup> Fondation d'Entreprise Ricard Prize show, in 2014.