

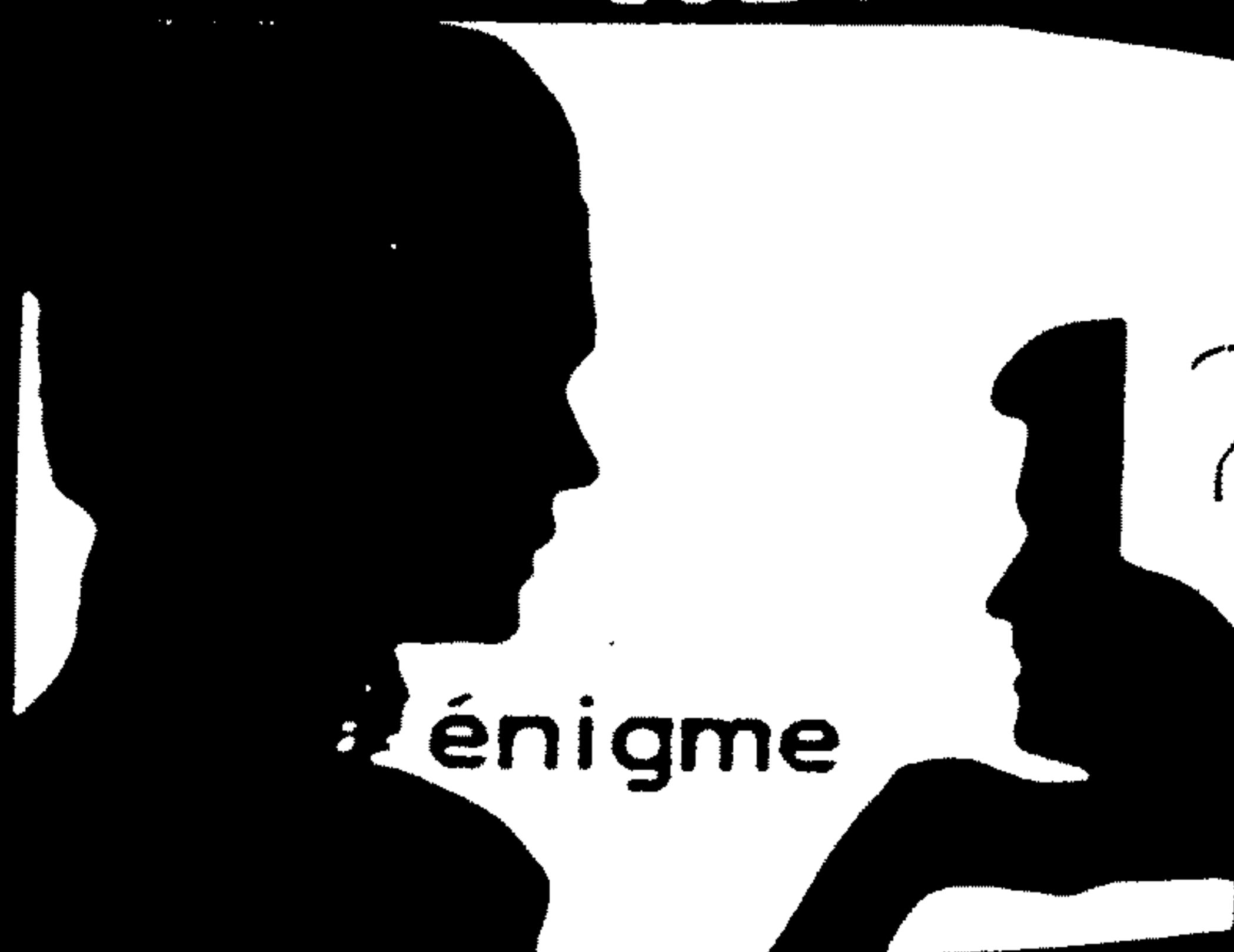
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Works For and About
French TV

Raul Ruiz

November 11-24, 1987



November 11 and 21:

La vocation suspendue (90 min., 1977)

November 12 and 22:

Débats (88 min., 1979)

Querelles de jardins (8 min., 1982)

November 13 and 23:

Petit manuel d'histoire de France (100 min., 1979)

November 14 and 24:

Ombres chinoises (7 min., 1982)

Voyage d'une main (20 min., 1983)

La présence réelle (80 min., 1984)

EXIT ART

578 Broadway New York City

All screenings at 8:30 pm
Admission: \$5/evening; \$15/4 evenings
Reservations recommended.

All works in French
Catalog with program notes available.

RAUL RUIZ: WORKS FOR AND ABOUT FRENCH TV is organized by
Jordi Torrent and produced by EXIT ART

World Television Premiere
EXIT ART in collaboration with CUNY-TV will present "Débats" on
cable channel A or 14, November 19 at 8 am, noon, 4 & 8 pm,
November 21 at 12:30 pm, November 22 at 6:30 pm

This program has been made possible by the New York State Council on
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the French Institute Alliance Française

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The Rhetorics Of The Labyrinth Explained

"It is not the things in reality that the director should be interested in, but rather, the spirit in and behind the things"

Carl Th. Dreyer

"Truth is not at, the bottom of the well, but at the interior of the labyrinth."

Raúl Ruiz

When working for television some directors get caught in the networks' all-audience politics; others in the educational magma of the PBS system; and others on the ethics of video-art aesthetics. Somehow Raúl Ruiz has escaped such a board and created his own game.

The selection of Ruiz's works that EXIT ART is presenting focuses on Ruiz's presence in French public television during the last decade. When he arrived to France in 1974 – escaping from General Pinochet's government in Chile – he already had considerable experience with the mechanics of television. During the 1964-65 season he was a writer for Mexican television. Later he worked for the Chilean television in various positions and was appointed director of programming during Salvador Allende's government. RAI-TV produced his film *Nadie dijo nada* in 1971. And *El cuerpo repartido y el mundo al revés* was produced in 1975 by the German TV station ZDF.

A few months after finishing *La Vocation Suspendue* (1977) – his first film for French TV – he produced *L'Hypothèse du Tableau Vole*, his French debut on TV's subversion and the detours of commissioned work. He was asked for a documentary on the French writer-artist-philosopher Pierre Klossowski (who's novel *La Vocation Suspendue* was adapted as a telefilm by Ruiz) and instead of 60 minutes of 'l'artiste à l'atelier' he delivered a complex thriller-like fiction co-written with Klossowski. Since then subverting and detouring commissions has become an 'intime' element of his film-making, because as Ruiz states, "in all commissions, there is space for freedom. A point of view, which one must find, from which everything can become expressive."¹

This process could not have been implemented without the Institut National de l'Audiovisuel (INA). I believe that some of the functions and politics of INA have changed in recent years, but Ruiz has been working within a organizational structure explained to me during an interview with Denis Freyd (then INA's Director of Production) in 1983.² INA was created in 1975 when the RTF (Radio Télévision Française) – the entity that conglomerated the entire apparatus of French TV – was divided in three different TV stations (TF1, TF2, TF3), one production facility (SFP) and one TV program laboratory (INA).

INA became a very special production facility with an annual budget for 60 hours of TV production (30 commissioned by the three networks and 30 from their own initiatives). There was funding for experimentation and no real commercial or ratings constraints on their productions. They were very interested in creating a "new audience" for their shows, like the one who each month tune-in for the series "Juste une Image" (see *Ombres Chinoises*). INA also co-produced programs with foreign TV stations, produced feature films, sponsored video-art (TV-art?) projects and developed new audiovisual technologies.

INA was a very unique organization that fit perfectly with Ruiz's programs. He has been able to use all the resources and open ends that INA had. He knows how to work quickly and within low budgets, and this has really helped him. In addition, someone at INA really liked and supported him. If not, how can we explain his continuous detours of commissioned documentaries? Several finished films have never been broadcast, but that didn't stop INA from commissioning more work from him.

With the exception of *Débats*, which was produced by the Center Georges Pompidou, the rest of our selection reflects the type of work produced or co-produced by INA. *La Vocation Suspendue*, is a telefilm released in movie theatres which has won prizes at international festivals (Grand Prix of the 1978 San Remo Festival), and is similar to another Ruiz-INA film production, the 1983 *Les Trois Couronnes du Matelot*. *Querelles de Jardins* is an example of his detourment of a commissioned documentary, along the same lines as *Un Homme, Un Château* (1978) or *L'Or Gris* (1980). *Petit Manuel d'Histoire de France* could only be produced through INA's access to TV archives and their disposition to experimentation. *Ombres Chinoises* reflects Ruiz's interest in polyphonic, rhetorical short films, as well as INA's experimentation in new TV discourse, along the line of *Une Image*, *Trois Sons*, *La Visite*; and *Un Couple (tout*

à l'avers) – probably the only visual palindrome ever filmed. The filming of *Voyage d'Une Main* was – among other things – "a pretext for the testing of a frontal projection system"³. *La Présence Réelle* is not merely a detoured commissioned documentary on the 1983 Festival de Teatre d'Avignon. At that point Raul Ruiz was respected enough to do as he pleased.

In 1986, Jack Lang appointed Ruiz Director of the Cultural Center of Le Havre. Since then, Ruiz has been developing there a film and video production center that certainly will encourage the birth of a different kind of 'nouvelle vague'. The very unique type of film, video and TV that Raúl Ruiz has been working on since his first film (*La Maleta*, 1960) has finally found its "train station of Perpignan" in Le Havre.

Jordi Torrent

¹Raúl Ruiz quoted in *Art Press* (France) no. 117, March 1987.

²*Video Actualidad* (Spain) May 1983.

³Raúl Ruiz quoted in *Art Press* (op. cit.)

The Television Work of Raúl Ruiz

What does it mean to discuss the television work of an artist known primarily as a filmmaker? Perhaps the original meaning of this notion was to refer to bodies of work made for network American television by Hollywood directors either at the beginning (e.g. Robert Altman) or at the end (Joseph H. Lewis, Jacques Tourneur) of their careers – work which was considered separate from their later (or earlier) films. A second meaning of the notion of “television work” might be to refer to the circumstances of production for feature films, especially in Europe. The bulk of the “New German Cinema,” for example, was produced by German television networks, even though these works were shown in film festivals and commercial movie houses long before they made it onto television.

Raúl Ruiz is perhaps the first major filmmaker for whom the notion of “television work” forms not merely an aside in a career or a means of financing but as an actual, integral part of his art. (That Ruiz *is* a major filmmaker should probably be beyond question at this point). For Ruiz, the ultimate subject of all his films produced by and in most cases destined for television has been the institution of television itself, and the conditions under which an artist might be able to work within that institution.

Ruiz’s arrival in France in 1973, following the military takeover in his native Chile, happened to coincide with a major reorganization of French television. The conglomerate ORTF was subdivided into several smaller agencies, one of which, the Institut National de l’Audiovisuel (INA), was set up specifically to commission “experimental” work for transmission by any of France’s three channels. Ruiz’s 1977 feature film, *THE SUSPENDED VOCATION*, was among the first projects financed by INA; from then until 1981, when Ruiz returned to feature filmmaking with *THE TERRITORY*, Ruiz would work almost exclusively for INA or on commissions given by one of the three channels, and he would continue to accept INA projects for several years after that. These projects would range from art documentaries (*HYPOTHESIS OF THE STOLEN PAINTING*) to political reports (*OF GREAT EVENTS AND ORDINARY PEOPLE*) to short inserts for news “magazines” programs (*SNAKES AND LADDERS*) – all filtered through Ruiz’s penetrating intelligence and joyous manipulation of film form and style.

Aside from steady work – a fact not to be discounted when speaking about an exile who arrived in Europe with next to nothing – television offered Ruiz a veritable world of forms and structures to discover and explore. Being an “exile artist” for Ruiz came to mean not simply a nostalgia for his home country (Ruiz had effectively put any such sentiments to rest in his first European film, *DIALOGUE OF EXILES*) but rather it came to symbolize his stance as an outsider, both literally and symbolically, to the television system. As an outsider, Ruiz had to learn French television’s peculiar conventions, which at times he seems incapable of following “correctly.” (The Brazilian film theorist Paulo Emilio Salles Gomes once spoke of Latin Americans’ “creative inability to copy.”) Ruiz’s misuse, or only partial use, of television conventions serves not

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only to deconstruct those conventions, but also at times, as in his "fiction about theory" (HYPOTHESIS OF THE STOLEN PAINTING), to point to ways of moving beyond conventionalized formats.

British critic Ian Christie has claimed that the approach found in Ruiz's television work alternates between parody and literalism; if HYPOTHESIS, with its Kenneth Clark-ish narrator and somber pronouncements, succinctly exemplifies the former, OF GREAT EVENTS AND ORDINARY PEOPLE is illustrative of the later approach. Conceived by INA as part of a series of films on the 1978 French presidential elections – with Ruiz's contribution meant to represent a foreigner's perspective on the process – OF GREAT EVENTS...becomes instead a meditation on the creation of political documentaries, and the implications of the form itself. It is in the "standardness" of the assignment, in the existence of a clear set of precedents for the kind of film which INA imagined Ruiz would make, that the underlying assumptions of ideology burst through.

The film begins with a voice-over announcement about the assignment to make a film on the upcoming French elections based around the attitudes and responses of those within Ruiz's own neighborhood. Almost immediately, problems begin to emerge: is what the newspaper vendor reveals more interesting than what he might be concealing? Since the neighborhood bar refuses to allow Ruiz to film there, will any other bar do just as well? Is it the information received, or merely the motif, "Interview in a Local Bar," that is really important?

The process of interrogation becomes wedded into the very structure of the film itself, as Ruiz divides it into chapters, each one representing the work of a different day; the objectivity of the news documentary is thus replaced by the subjectivity of the diary. The filming of actual polling places and election booths takes on a special emotional relevance when one considers the irony of a filmmaker driven out of his own country by an anti-democratic military junta being asked to comment upon elections staged and reported like sporting events. The interview format itself, finally, becomes remarkable; the ease with which people respond to questions perhaps implies the relative unimportance of whatever they say, whereas those same questions, if honestly answered in Santiago of Chile, could lead to imprisonment or worse.

For Ruiz, what's revealed by the filmmaking process is not the democratic, electoral process but the spectacle of that process. The frequent, increasingly rapid repetition of previous sequences serves not only to nullify their content but also to reveal the workings of the new documentary format; one almost feels that the viewer could fill in all the appropriate dialog. The format itself, with its "candid" opinions and contrasting viewpoints, is the actual message; the filmmaker him or herself simply becomes an employee of an institution, assigned to the task of merely putting forth what is already familiar. Ruiz even goes further in OF GREAT EVENTS...to question the entire ancestry of the documentary (his own film suggests a re-working of LE JOLI MAI), linking it implicitly with imperialism (in its frequent taste for the exotic) and with subtle forms of social control through its presentation of a social cohesion that actually masks the deep divisions in society.

Ruiz's SHORT MANUAL OF FRENCH HISTORY in a sense does for the educational film what OF GREAT EVENTS.. does for the political documentary. After some opening scenes of children reading school primers detailing the history of France ("The Gauls had mixed ancestry. They had no common fatherland, and even waged war against their own men."), the film becomes a kind of montage of sequences taken from historical television series such as "Enigmas of History" or "The Great Battles of the Past." At times, a shift in a few years will bring us into another film, in which the same historical personages will be played different by actors; no less than four Joans of Arc appear, conveying that the actual historical figure matters less than the role itself and its meaning today. Ruiz shows how our understanding of "history" becomes inseparable from our understanding of the codes of fiction, with requisite private tragedies occurring in moments of public victory, etc. The result is a composite portrait not of French history, but of what French history might look like if these innumerable television series were in fact taken literally.

Unlike the cinema, with its cult of "auteur," television is a quintessentially anonymous medium, with viewers rarely aware of the identities of the artists responsible for making individual programs (or aware, in some sense, that programs are even "made"). Anonymity, or its corollary the loss of control over a work of art, would continue to be an important aspect of Ruiz's films even after he had begun working more regularly on more highly-visible feature films. The disappearance of the artist is of course a major theme of HYPOTHESIS as well as in THE SUSPENDED VOCATION, in which a contemporary filmmaker attempts to piece together a film usage footage on the same subject shot in two different periods. In OF GREAT EVENTS..., SHORT MANUAL..., IMAGES OF DEBATE, and LA PRESENCE REELE, the ultimate author is shown to be the television institution itself, through its rigid set of conventions and practices which denies the very notion of individual artistic vision. In his later work, such as THE THREE CROWNS OF THE SAILOR and CITY OF PIRATES, in which the focus of Ruiz's work becomes the conventions of cinematic story-telling, Ruiz again evokes the theme of the "author's disappearance" by loading his images with so many levels of meaning that the notion of reading the author's intentions in the work becomes itself meaningless.

The idea of television, then, for Ruiz becomes an overriding metaphor for contemporary artistic practice in much the same way as the idea of the movies had earlier preoccupied generations of writers and visual artists. Rather than merely a chapter or a detour in his career thus far, it forms a central core of reference for all his work – the perfect symbol, perhaps, for an artist who sees the world around us as simply a simulacra for the real thing.

Richard Peña

Director, The Film Center of the School of Art Institute of Chicago.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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Jordi Torrent

Program Notes

La Vocation Suspendue

(The Suspended Vocation) Film 90 min. Color and B&W 1977.

Written and Directed by Raúl Ruiz

Produced by Jean Baronet for I.N.A.

Based on the novel *La Vocation Suspendue* by Pierre Klossowski.

Director of photography: Sacha Vierny

Camera operator: Maurice Perrimond

Editor: Valeria Sarmiento

Music: Jorge Arriagada

Cast: Didier Flamand, Pascal Bonitzer, Francois Simon, Daniel Gelin, Edith Scob, Frederique Meininger, Genevieve Mnich, Sylvie Herbert, Jean Rougeul, Jean Frapat, Paul Eric Schulman

"I discovered Pierre Klossowski in Panama while reading *Logique du sens* by Gilles Deleuze. I was very shocked by the use of those very Wittgenstein-ian questions: the idea of 'pantomime', the 'games of language', 'the state of things'. And all this applied to daisy-chains! Later reading *La Vocation Suspendue* I found all the problems that I had lived and reflected upon in Chile during the Unidad Popular. It was a kind of categorization, a catalogue of political behaviors.... This book of Klossowski really got me; it starts like a prologue, and one does not realize until the end that the book is that prologue."

Raúl Ruiz quoted in *Raoul Ruiz* by Christine Buci-Glucksmann and Fabrice Revault D'Allonnes, (Editions DIS VOIR, Sarl, 1987).

"Around 1975 I read the novel which I found by chance (I didn't know Klossowski at all at that time.) And I saw discussions there which, all being very far from the arguments of the Chilean left in which I participated clarified what there was of the ritualistic in it. That wasn't to take distance from and ridicule the arguments; it was to make obvious what was there of ritualistic in the two approaches, in this machine which is the Institution."

"D'une Institution L'Autre," interview with Raúl Ruiz. *Cahiers du Cinéma* no. 287, April 1978.

"Ostensibly a faithful adaptation of Klossowski's autobiographical novel about the struggles between rival doctrinal factions within the Catholic church, *The Suspended Vocation* emerges as a puzzle film to rival *Marienbad* and a perverse metaphor for political power. By turns baffling and hilarious, it illustrates Ruiz's belief (shared by St Augustine and Stalin) that institutions, to survive, must become like besieged citadels, treating all dissidence as treason."

Ian Christie, *N.F.T.*, September 1981.

"It can briefly be summarized as recounting the dilemma of a young seminarist caught up in the ideological feuding of the Jesuits and the partisans of a matriarchal Church based on the cult of the Virgin, the latter further subdividing into two equally opposed sects. Such doubling and redoubling functions as a 'mise en abîme' of the film's own esoteric construction. In fact, there purports to be two films, boasting separate casts, one supposedly shot in the 40's, the other its revisionist remake from the 60's. These respectively in black and white (or on occasion sepia) and colour, are by no means impeccably intercut. An actor from one will stray into the other; ambiguous cross-cutting between the two misleads us into believing the same cinematic space to be intimately cohabited; and the odd contemporary incidental – a Volkswagon van, a pinned-up reminder that Maurice Cloche's Monsieur Vincent (whose oleaginous textures are parodied by Vierny's photography) is playing on television – surfaces anachronistically in the earlier version. Further 'outré' complications include a monastery fresco in which St. Bernard, who rejected the doctrine of Immaculate Conception, is mysteriously painted into a Nativity: an atrocity snapshot of a ravished nun which turns out to have been fraudulently perpetrated by an atheistic painter (played by Daniel Gelin) and his mistress; and the fact that, by the film's end and according to the precepts of the World Upside Down, the mistress has indeed become a nun while the painter coolly serves Mass to the faithful.

Ruiz (a former seminarist himself, as was Klossowski) portrays the Catholic Church as a secret society, a freemasonry, the paradigm of all totalitarian institutions, not excluding its supposedly diametric antithesis, the Communist Party: Raoul makes a neat comparison between St. Bernard's suspect proximity to the Virgin and the inconvenient presence of Trotsky, say, in early photographs of the Bolsheviks.... Because, for

the first time, he respected both Klossowski's dialogue and the 'découpage' of his own shooting script, there is an abundance of visual felicities of a kind unthinkable in the free-for-all of his Chilean period. Ruiz-ian 'trouvailles' abound: a gold-embossed family album in which lewd pin-ups jostle with childhood snaps, a hilarious Swingle Singerstype chorale to accompany some of the film's more austere imagery, a two-headed crucifix like a playing card."

Gilbert Adair, *Sight & Sound* Vol. 51, no. 1, Winter 1981-82.

Querelle de Jardins

(The Gardens' Quarrel) Film 9 min. Color 1982.

Directed by Raúl Ruiz

Narrator: Frank Oger

Technical Consultant: Alain Richert

Produced by I.N.A. for the series "Botaniques"

"Raúl Ruiz filmed the gardens of the château de Versailles: The first one, French, cen-

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"Raúl Ruiz filmed the gardens of the château de Versailles: The first one, French, centralize around the kings square (everything is arranged in order to be seen). The other one, English, is the exact opposite, because from any point, one is out of view. With these two constructions, the labyrinth and the concentric circles, Ruiz installs a 'roman-photo' plot: A husband and his mistress rendez-vous in the English garden (one understands why) and, by a series of accidents, and afraid of being seen, he changes to the other garden. There he runs into his wife who is with her lover; and into the ex-husband of his wife who is with his new mistress; and into the new lover of his ex-wife....We never see this husband; it's the subjective view of the camera. As in [the film] *Le Borgne* (The One-Eyed Man), it's the camera that creates the fiction: it oscillates between the desire of being at the center of the scene, well in view and filming (viewing) without being seen. In Ruiz, when the camera "marries" the point of view of a character many "divorces" are in perspective. Between the two elements – 'les deux lieux (communs)' – the picture (the gardens of Versailles) and the plot (the voice-over) the camera is the object and the subject of continuous quarrels." Charles Tesson, *Cahiers du Cinéma*, no. 333, March 1982.

Débats

(Debates) 88 min, ¾" Video, Color, 1979.

Directed by Raúl Ruiz.

Produced by the Service Audiovisuel of the CNAC/Centre Georges Pompidou.

Probably the most accurate vivisection ever performed on television debates. The work is a compilation of excerpts from real and staged television debates revealing Ruiz' cynical view of their presentations and subject matter. The tape opens with a segment from "Apostrophes" (a prime time TV debate large following in France) in which a group of French intellectuals representing a variety of faiths (Muslim, Judaism, Protestantism, Catholicism, Atheism) discusses the nature of the Annunciation angel, the death of a sinner, the issue of history and monoteism. Finally, one of the panelists, Bernard-Henri Levy, l'enfant terrible of the new French philosophy, speaks to address Jeremiah's prophecies. From there, the tape continues in a series of segments from 9 different debates, some real and others staged. It includes highly caustic, cynical segments such as one displaying the taping of a pre-arranged debate where the guests leave blank pauses on the tape that later will be filled by the opponent's answers. The moderator coaches the participants by telling them when to look angry or quiet. The subject of this debate is "the five goals of soccer." *Débats* ends with an American guest besieged verbally by a group of people on the issue of American intervention in Vietnam. The discussion shifts to the issue of the nature of B-films and Leon Trotsky; suddenly the moderator intervenes to remind panelist that the subject of the debate is "Tennis and skiing, games or sports?" Another guest appears who proceeds to give an apology for tennis as a sport. The American guest does not approve of such a theory and insists that skiing is a real sport while tennis is only a game. This segment concludes with the two men making an appointment for a tennis match. (J.T.)

Petit Manuel d'Histoire de France

(Short Manual of French History) 100 min. 2" Video B&W and Color 1979.

Composed by Raúl Ruiz

With clips from the French TV programs and series: "Enigmes de l'Histoire-La Camera Explore le Temps," "Les Grandes Batailles du Passe," "Présence du Passe." And

film clips from "Napoleon" by Abel Gance, "La Prise du Pouvoir par Louis XIV" by Roberto Rossellini and "Sortie d'Usine" by Auguste and Louis Lumière.

Commentaries from the elementary school manuals: C. Calvet (1903), A. Aymard (1929), David Ferre Poitevin (1956), and Audrin and Dehappe (1968). Read by: Marie (9 years old), Cécile (10), Véronique (12), Valérie (13) and Sophie (17).

Edited by Valeria Sarmiento

Artistic Consultant: Claude Martinez

Researchers: Louissette Kahane and Gilles Nadeau

Produced by FR 3 and I.N.A.

The opening voice-over tells us that "The French are of the same race and that all of them consider France as their country. The Gauls were of different races and they didn't have a communal land, they even fought against each other." The last voice over informs us that "In 1985 the Lumière brothers invented cinema." From the first voice to the last one (nearly two hours later) we have been the witness of one of the most intelligent and cynical accounts of French history, as perceived through its television and its textbook history. And the French government paid for this entire tape! Mistakes and fumbles of the schoolchildren reading the quiet insipid scholar texts are particularly enjoyable. (J.T.)

"A videotape compilation of French history 'from our ancestors the Gauls...to the invention of cinema,' it proceeds exclusively through quotation, comprising an audiovisual equivalent to the sort of work Walter Benjamin once dreamed of producing. Clips from former French TV programmes and series on French history are accompanied by the voices of French school children reading from primary school textbooks which date from 1903, 1929, 1956, and 1968. Frankly fictionalised representations of events derived from plays are interspersed with more non-fictional recreations, and some of the juxtapositions are spatial as well as temporal, for the programmes make frequent use of splitscreen diptychs. To keep the chronology straight and the format educational, the date right hand corner of the frame and in keeping with the French auteurist consciousness which tends to see each representation as an individual creation, subtitles periodically identify each clip with a title and one or more auteurs.

"It was an illustration for a debate about the television debates which took place in Beaubourg. They asked me for a montage of television debates but I couldn't do it because at that time, the debates weren't too representative and the documents weren't too good. So, we made fake debates with people who knew their subjects. I played on certain anomalies of the debates: we even organized debates without subjects; on others the subject wondered, there was a debate between Andre Engels et Daniel Pautrat which ended almost in a fight after being started by the problem of time against space in theatre. This was shown before the planned debate on the debates and this debate fit perfectly on the norms of my fake debates."
Raúl Ruiz quoted in *Cahiers du Cinéma* no. 345, March 1983.

The subversive aspect of this Short History of France mainly has to do with the overall proliferation of representation, whereby the same actor might turn up portraying two or more characters in periods that are centuries apart, and Joan of Arc is successively presented to us via Shaw (Saint Joan), Meunier (Jeanne et ses juges) and Claudel (Jeanne au Bucher). This leads to a subtle tone of self-parody, amplified in part by the faltering or mechanical delivery of some of the off-screen children, gradually undermining the very notion of history which series is presumably designed to perpetuate – a sly sense of decision which only comes to the fore when Ruiz finally gets to Napoleon and uses what is apparently the series only film clip, a French rapid montage from Gance's *Napoleon*. To hammer his point home, Ruiz immediately follows this clip with an equally rapid montage of his own, running through earlier parts of the programme – a helter-skelter heap of near subliminal flashes, one shot per era, which effectively reduces all French history to a hysterical flood of incoherent clichés. Then the programme calmly reverts to business as usual, and the 'reductio ad absurdum' principle remains as an implicit echo rather than as an explicit strategy. Having made his momentary assault, Ruiz fades back into the woodwork, resumes his anonymity, and indeed the only overt sign of the programme's double edge to come at the end appears to be entirely fortuitous, when the following legend appears on the screen: 'La prochaine semaine: La vie est un spectacle.'

Jonathan Rosenbaum in "Beating The Labyrinth," *M.F.B.*, 1984.

"I tried to learn more about official art and this led me to make the *Petit Manuel d'Histoire de France*, which is a two-hour compilation drawn from the very worst of the French television grand fiascos dealing with French history. This stereotypic history has three sources in France: Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas and Michelet; and it seems to be the first strong expression of a history that goes from primitive tribes to the perfection of society, with a succession of heroes as the key figures.

Interestingly, the stereotypes are the same as in Latin American history, and the idea of the 'invention' of Latin America is not far from the virtual invention of France that occurred in the 19th century."

Raúl Ruiz interviewed by Ian Christie and Malcolm Coad in *AFTERIMAGE* (U.K.) no. 10, Autumn 1981.

Ombres Chinoises

(Chinese Shadows) Film 7½ min Color 1982.

Written and directed by Raúl Ruiz

Produced by I.N.A. for the series "Juste une Image."

Based on "36 Dramatic Situations" by Georges Polti

Ombres Chinoises was produced for the French TV magazine "Juste une Image," a monthly show which in its almost three years of production catalogued all kinds of visual experimentations: from Muybridge to the latest computer animation of the New

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Based on "36 Dramatic Situations" by Georges Polti

Ombres Chinoises was produced for the French TV magazine "Juste une Image," a monthly show which in its almost three years of production catalogued all kinds of visual experimentations: from Muybridge to the latest computer animation of the New York Institute of Technology. I.N.A. asked for Ruiz's participation for the April 1982 show. He decided to produce *Ombres Chinoises* (probably a project that was wandering in his mind long before), a catalog of dramatic situations acted out by Chinese shadows with voice-over narrations. Nothing comes closer to the Ruiz-ian aesthetics. After the first dramatic situation, titled "enigma," a panel reads:

"Gozzi affirmed that there are only 36 tragic situations. Schiller tried very hard to find more of them, but he found less than Gozzi." Goethe.

This quotation introduces us to Ruiz's delirious flow of situations staged with the shadows that follows, each with the title that appears on the screen: to implore; the saviour; the revenge after the crime; to track down; disaster; to prey; muting; audacious tentative; a kidnapping; to procure; to hate the one near; rivalry with the one near; madness; fatal imprudence; involuntary crime of love; and "etc."

In total Ruiz catalogues 17 situations. The accompanying voice-overs for these intriguing shadows contain dialogue, such as from the segment labeled "etc.," "...each man for himself and God against all....Yes, I am God and you have committed adultery with my mother. So...then it was true that she was the Virgin....We are all adulterous." At the end of the tape, another panel informs us that "Renard affirmed that from the 36 situations codified by Polti, there are only 200,000 possible secondary situations. The computer expert W. Rojas tried very hard to find more of them. But he couldn't find more than 120,000." (J.T.)

Voyage d'une Main

(Voyage of a Hand) Film 20 min. Color 1983.

Directed by Raúl Ruiz

Inspired from the travels of the Polish writer Potocki.

Director of photography: Jacques Bouquin

Edited by Valeria Sarmiento

Assistant Director: Jean Martine

Produced by I.N.A.

Cast: Frank Oger, Nadege Clair, Camilia Mora, Martine Odile

"I did a film, *Voyage of a Hand*," of which the pretext was the testing of a frontal projection system. I gave texts haphazardly to the actors, shot by shot. And the story began to take shape by itself, like the way one writes, in an instant."

Raúl Ruiz quoted in *Art Press* no. 112, March 1987.

In *Voyage of a Hand* Ruiz constructs another of his concentric labyrinths that hits us right in the multifaceted center of our confusion. We might decide that what we receive was a story full of intentions; or we might decide that it was a spineless joke empty of sense or direction. In any case it will be difficult to deny the acid sense of humor that animates the film.

The first image (a hand caressing the statue of a naked black woman) and the accompanying sounds (hysterical laughs over wincing strings) sets the tone. The film develops into a series of very theatrical sequences which will tell the "story" of a man and his left hand – a voice-over informs us that "his hate for Europe could very well be the result of his orphaned childhood oppressed by an authoritarian governess." We jump to a scene where three men discuss the price of...; One of them says of the man next to him that "he has stolen the soul of his brother. He had two souls. Later his brother stole all of his, he has nothing now....He sells himself for a coin." They proceed to discuss the price by whistling one to the other. In the next scene a doctor says while look-

ing*at the man's hand, "You are sick. Looking attentively at your hand I can see maps of Europe, Africa, and Mongolia mixed all together. If I look closer I can see the Ajax constellation. If I look even closer I can see myself looking at your hand. And if I look even closer I see an infinity of hands at the interior of your hand." In another scene the man confesses that "my secret is the story of *The Skin of a Grief* by Balzac. It is quite my own story." In another scene he affirms that all travelers make the same travel; the one that Ulysses did. And I have discovered that all voyages have the form of a hand." At one point a Chinese doctor reads a poem that he sees in the hand. Later we discover that the man has cut his hand off and he has sewed his eyes because now he can feel all through his amputated hand. At the end of the film the man entrusts us that before killing himself he will confess his last dream "I dream I was a Negro." (J.T.)

La Présence Réelle

(The Real Presence) Film 60 min. Color 1984.

Directed by Raúl Ruiz

Assistant Director: Françoise Ede and Luis Mora

Photography: Jacques Bouquin, Acaïn Salomon, Gerald Dumour, Martin Legrand.

Edited by: Martine Bouquin and Françoise Sueur.

Production Coordinator: Françoise Dumas

Cast: Frank Oger, Nadege Clair, Camilia Mora, Catherine Oudin, Lou Castel, Jean-Loup Riviere.

Produced by FR3, I.N.A. with the participation of the Ministry of Culture.

"...His film occasioned by the 1983 Avignon Festival amply sustained a reputation for baroque complexity. *La Présence Réelle*, its title a punning reference to the theological doctrine of transubstantiation purports to be a television documentary on the various manifestations of theatre at the Festival, but framed within the science-fiction conceit of an interactive video conducted tour by an out-of-work actor. Thanks to some remarkable low-tech special effects, our guide finds himself the spectator of his own performance and eventual suicide as the piece broadens into a dizzying meditation on the frontiers of the theatrical illusion."

Ian Christie, *B.F.I.*, 1986

La Présence Réelle works through four axes of plot which are intercut throughout the tape:

1. Adam Shaft, an out-of-work actor who recently worked on a interactive video disc documentary about the Avignon Theater Festival, and who is now in a studio watching the program with the help of a computer specialist. Through conversations between Shaft and the computer specialist we find out that only 10% of time-space images in the video disc have been recorded from actual footage and the rest of the disc has been created by the computer using the "real presence" of living beings. At one point Shaft complains because in the video disc his images are saying things that he never said. The computer specialist explains to him that his words have been used to create an entity that thinks and talks by itself, but that will not necessarily say things that Shaft would have though or said.

2. The second axis of action are the several meetings between the actor and the director of the Avignon Theater Festival. In each meeting Shaft proposes to him a more complicated, and impossible to produce project.

3. The third one is the actor's relation with a friend, in whose apartment he will live while he is in Avignon. During the first visit to the apartment the actor's friend states that "the only theatrical spectacle worth this name is the miracle... Lourdes!" At the end of this meeting, the voice-over informs us that his friend has contaminated the actor with "the disease."

Immediately after, Shaft attempts to commit suicide. He wakes with the help of Beatrice – a girl who has been working on the character Iphigenia for 10 years, a depressing effort because she just realised that when she will master the character she will be too old to perform it. After dining together, Shaft, his friend, Beatrice, and his friend's ex-wife arrive at an empty theatre. There they see themselves on stage and are bewildered by what is real and what is not: reality or its representation? The voice-over informs us that Shaft, the out-of-work actor, succeeds at his second attempt at suicide; meanwhile we see him sitting bored in the empty theater.

4. The fourth axis of the action is a documentary of excerpts from theatrical productions and rehearsals at the Avignon Festival. They include: *La Devotion à la Croix* by Calderon, *Dernières Nouvelles de la Peste* by Bernard Chartreux, *Les Démons* by Les Comediants and *Les Céphéides* by Jean-Christophe Bailly. (J.T.)

Raúl Ruiz

A presentation is an enigma of welcomes,
and exile is an advantage of a few.
Talent with boundaries rebuilds vision
when history becomes melted with images
and irony is glue with celluloids.
However Raúl Ruiz is here.
(Presque officiel, le premiere aux U.S.A.)
Concept film inside
outside / invention of little things into big ideas,
reconstruction of film ad infinitum.
Chilepoesia.
(Fait en France)
In each hair an idea grows
via television
y a todo color.

Papo Colo
Co-founder, EXIT ART

Works For And About French TV

Raúl Ruiz – Works For and About French TV demonstrates EXIT ART's commitment to the issues of transculture – the right of culture to change itself, the way that cultures influence each other to become another transformation of those cultures. It is not a melting pot or a co-existence of different ethnics, but rather a transmutation, provoking another dimension in the artist's work. In transculture one cannot isolate those influences in an artist's work, a cultural dissection of images and ideas, but rather transculture allows for a new context in which the work can be understood. This work should not be considered marginal to that culture, not the 'other' but rather a parallel aesthetic. Raúl Ruiz is an artist who through his life and his work, through his process of constructing images and collages of languages, through the physical act of exile and immigration epitomizes transculture.

I would like to thank Jordi Torrent, Project Director, for conceiving and organizing this significant project, to Richard Peña, Director of the Film Center of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, for his insightful essay, to Stuart Anthony for coordinating all aspects of the project, and to Papo Colo for his unique catalogue and poster design.

Jeanette Ingberman
Executive Director EXIT ART

The Purpose Of Exit Art Is:

- to research essential issues in contemporary art and to present a thorough analysis and overview of these issues through the organization of exhibitions, film and video programs, panel discussions and the publication of catalogues.
- to organize comprehensive one-person exhibitions of mid-career artists who have not received significant critical attention or exposure and through catalogues with critical essays to place their work within an historical context.
- to document artists whose work is difficult to categorize or exhibit either because of their content or manner of working, and to make this information available to a larger public through exhibitions and publications.
- to produce special projects and activities that bring together artists of different disciplines to work collaboratively on an event including: dance, music, performance, poetry and visual art.
- to work with individual artists to sponsor and produce their special projects including: installations, record albums, print portfolios, films, special edition books, etc.
- to present all these activities within a context of the transcultural reality of art in the society of the 80's, establishing a dialogue between different backgrounds and aesthetic values.

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