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Anabases

Eric Baudelaire

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October 31 - December 19, 2009

Opening Reception: Saturday, October 31, 6-8 pm

Elizabeth Dee is pleased to present *Anabases*, Eric Baudelaire's second solo show at the gallery, which is at once a continuation and a departure from *Circumambulation*, his 2007 inquiry into the cyclical and hypnotic relationship between image and event. Once again, the work presented is part of a greater cycle where pieces in different media are federated by an allegory of movement. But where *Circumambulation* navigated around a space left empty by a particular event that unfolded on September 11th, and the ensuing effect it had on our lives and our relationship to images, the ambulation at work in the current cycle stems from a literary motif inspired by Xenophon's *Anabasis*. And yet, it isn't so much a story or a destination that the show refers to. Instead, *Anabases* is an inquiry into the idea of a movement, the internal logic of which is embedded in the structure of the works on display.

What kind of movement is inscribed in *Anabases*? One that originates in Xenophon's historical epic, also known as the Persian Expedition, which recounts a leaderless retreat of ten thousand Greek mercenaries in search of a way home through unknown lands following the unexpected death of the Persian prince who had retained them. The itinerary becomes more allegorical in its many adaptations, including those by the poets St John Perse and Paul Celan, the 1979 cult film *Warriors*, its imminent Tony Scott remake, an Xbox game, and a lecture by Alain Badiou who employed the idea in his seminary on the 20th century at the Collège International de Philosophie. What the various incarnations of anabasis have in common is a principle of wandering, the notion of a journey into the *new* which isn't a simple return because it forges its own path without knowing whether it leads towards home. Badiou defines anabasis as "a free invention of a meandering which *will have been* a return, a return which, prior to the wandering, did not exist as a return." (1) And in tracing this undecidability, he notes that the notion of a disjunctive synthesis of will and wandering is embedded in the Greek etymology of the word itself since the verb $\alpha\&\nu\&\alpha\&\beta\&\alpha\&\nu\&\epsilon\&\iota\&\nu$; ("to anabase," as it were), means both "to embark" and "to return."

This idea is at the heart of the works in *Anabases*: either allegorically, in terms of process, or in their conceptual structure, they each inhabit the idea of an uncertain movement that fundamentally changes in status or in meaning as it reaches its endpoint. The meandering becomes a return, but before being a return, it was an undetermined wandering. And while this essential transformation occurs at the end, it retroactively alters the nature of the movement that had taken place until that point.

Since 2005, Baudelaire's practice has been rooted in an ongoing exploration of images and documents. With pieces like *The Dreadful Details* (2006) and *Sugar Water* (2007), he worked less as a photographer than as a factographer, fabricating images that tended towards the real, false documents that created a mimesis of events as a device to decode the modes of fabrication, dissemination and consumption of images.

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With *Anabases*, the practice is reversed; instead of creating fictions that appear to be documents, Baudelaire uses real documents to extract fictions. Here, the documentary materials are strictly sampled from the real, the gesture consists in their assembly, reproduction or recontextualization, which opens up new narrative spaces or initiates original forms.

Anabases encompasses a series of heliogravure prints sampling pages of western art magazines from which genitalia has been scratched out by Japanese press distributors (*Of Signs and Senses*), vitrines of found film stills matched to bits of narratives from un-made Antonioni film treatments (*The Makes*), photographs printed from rolls of traveling unexposed film (*Anabasis X-rayograms*), and *Wall Street Journal* clippings from September 2008 in which verses from a Paul Verlaine poem are revealed (*Chanson d'automne*). A booklet titled *Anabases: Source Documents* can be taken away as a memento and serves as a libretto for the show, reproducing the original materials from which the works originate and contextualizing them with a chronology of *Anabases*-related events. These narratives of disjunctive synthesis inside the gallery are signaled with a broken neon-sign on the façade (**THE ROSE**), and developed further with two new films (*[sic]* and *The Makes*) that depart from the strictly documentary nature of the rest of the works, linking back to Baudelaire's factographic practice.

The *Anabases* cycle was initiated during an eight-month residency at the Villa Kujoyama, in Kyoto, Japan, in 2008, and received support from the French consulate in New York City.

Eric Baudelaire lives and works in Paris, France. He graduated from Brown University in 1994. Since 2005, his work has been exhibited throughout Europe and North America. *Anabases* at Elizabeth Dee Gallery will run simultaneously with its counterpart at Galerie Greta Meert in Brussels.

Please contact the gallery for more information, +1 212 924 7545.

(1) Badiou, Alain, *Le Siècle*, Paris: Seuil, 2005, Chapter 8.