

RAPHAËL ZARKA

GIBELLINA VECCHIA

Private View: Tuesday 11th October, 6-9pm

Exhibition: 12th October - 26th November 2011

BISCHOFF/WEISS 14a Hay Hill London W1J 8NZ

14 VIEWS OF GIBELLINA NUOVA

Frieze Art Fair: 13th - 16th October 2011

BISCHOFF/WEISS, STAND R25 FRIEZE ART FAIR, LONDON

Opening times: Tuesday - Saturday 10am - 6pm

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Raphaël Zarka, 14 views of Gibellina Nuova, 2011, 16mm film transferred to HD, 3'30", location shots



Raphaël Zarka, 14 views of Gibellina Nuova, 2011, 16mm film transferred to HD, 3'30", location shot



Raphaël Zarka, Gibellina Vecchia, 2010, 16mm film transferred to HD, 10'30", location shot

Raphaël Zarka documents forms. Rather, he collects them, teasing out relationships across different contexts and media. In an interview with Elisabeth Wetterwald the artist says: 'For a documentary practice to be more than just a collection of various documents, one *mneimosyne* among others, it has to engage in modes of production / restitution such as the copy, the replica, the reconstruction, or the readymade'. It is this propensity to combine or offset production with restitution, via differing techniques and modes of display, which imbues Zarka's self-styled documentary practice with a sense of formal and intellectual discovery.

Gibellina, a small Sicilian village destroyed in a 1968 earthquake, serves as the focus for the artist's recent body of work and the subject of two films, produced during a year-long residency in Italy. In the first *Gibellina Vecchia* (2010), Zarka documents *Il Grande Cretto*, a vast concrete memorial sculpture made by Alberto Burri in the 1980s. The sculpture, covering hundreds of metres but never completed due to lack of funding, is based on the Italian artist's cracked paintings: an immense mass of fractured grey that smothers the landscape, its layout mimicking the buildings and streets of the former village. Shot on super 16 and awash with the muted colours of the Sicilian hills, architects are seen surveying the sculpture, local farmers strolling past and students chatting amongst the abstract shapes. The artist's characteristically straight camera work and unfussy editing hones in unemotionally on the sculpture, showing how it is experienced, used and understood by differing people. The detached, documentary footage shows how a sculpture, a form, becomes reconfigured over time: what was a grand response to a tragic event now serves a more humble, quotidian role.

In *14 views of Gibellina Nuova* (2011) Zarka turns his gaze to the eponymous town built 20km from the ruins to house residents displaced by the earthquake. Constructed in the 1980s by Italy's leading architects and home to a number of public works gifted by prominent artists, the town was intended as a monument to the country's modernist credentials. The film comprises a sequence of 14 shots of bold architectural designs and formalist public sculpture that now sit in a state of disrepair – the town a modernist ruin unable to live up to its original goals. For Zarka, Gibellina Nuova appears as a relic of failed ideals, a site of unrealised potential – yet also as testament to the promise invested in art.

Whilst Gibellina serves as a starting point, Zarka punctuates his research and subsequent displays with objects and images drawn from a vast swathe of source material. For example, an 18th century Piranesi etching, showing plans for the city of Rome, is used as the basis for *La déduction de Giovanni Battista* (2011), a wooden sculpture whose cut-out forms mimic the boulders and contours of *Il Grande Cretto*. The Piranesi etching – produced 200 years before the Gibellina work – is reconstituted as an echo of Burri's form. Equally, *La déduction de Burri* (2011) is a manifestation of the unrealised section of *Il Grande Cretto* – an empirical rendering of the missing section of Burri's public monument. Isolated from its surrounding landscape, Burri's motif is reduced to a formal design. Shown alongside photographs and found objects, Zarka's interpretations become further iterations in a never-ending sequence of forms where the found, copied or constructed are deployed to build up Zarka's alternative formal categorisation.

In the series 'Reconstructed Angles' Zarka appropriates forms from Renaissance paintings, isolating and reconstituting them as abstract, architectonic sculptures. Pieces of furniture that appear in the works of Italian masters such as Uccello or Messina are meticulously constructed, their perspectival rendering translated into three dimensions. Shown in isolation the sculptures appear as miniature monuments to

the Renaissance and its principles, when art and science fed off one another's advancements. Viewed within the context of Gibellina, however, Zarka's sculptures bear testament to the artist's excavation of a myriad of different sources – an excavation that points to form's constantly evolving potential.

Nick Aikens

Raphaël Zarka, born in Montpellier, France in 1977 lives and works in Paris. In 2008 he was awarded the Ricard Foundation prize for contemporary art. He is currently undertaking a residency at the Villa Medici, Rome.

Current group exhibitions include: *ERRE*, Centre Pompidou-Metz, Metz Cedex, France (2011).

Forthcoming exhibitions include: Le Grand Café, Contemporary Art Centre, Saint-Nazaire, France (2011) Performa 11, New York, USA (2011)

Previous screenings include: *Raphaël Zarka*, Tate Modern, London, England (2011), *Vidéo et Après*, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France (2011) *Gibellina Vecchia*, International Film Festival in Rotterdam (2011). Previous solo exhibitions include: *Gibellina*, CAN, Neuchâtel, Switzerland (2011), *Principles of Roman Knowledge*, Pastificio de Cerere, Rome, Italy (2011), *Raphaël Zarka*, Stroom, Den Haag, Netherlands (2011), *PERGOLA*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2010), *Geometry Improved*, Modern Art Oxford, Oxford, England (2009), *Documentary Sculptures*, Motive Gallery, Amsterdam (2009), *Ratiocination*, Galerie Michel Rein, Paris, France (2008), Padova, La Vitrine, Paris, France (2008).

Previous group exhibitions include: *Seconde main*, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, France (2010), *Spatial City: An Architecture of Idealism*, Institute of Visual Arts (Inova), Milwaukee, USA, Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCAD), Detroit, USA (2010), *Diamonds on the soles of her shoes*, BISCHOFF/WEISS, London, England (2010), *La Planète des Signes*, Le Plateau, Paris (2009), *Les Archipels Réinventées*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2008).

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Raphaël Zarka, *Gibellina Vecchia*, 2010, 16mm film transferred to HD, 10'30"
Raphaël Zarka, *14 views of Gibellina Nuova*, 2011, 16mm film transferred to HD, 3'30"

Director: Raphaël Zarka, Cinematographer: Hugues Gémignani, Assistant Director: Nicolas Sbrufati, Sound Editor: Rosalie Revoivre, Editor: Damien Maestruggi, Production of *Gibellina Vecchia* courtesy of Frac Alsace, Sélestat (F), Stroom Den Haag, La Haye (NL), CAN - Centre d'Art Neuchâtel (CH), Centre culturel français de Palerme et de Sicile / Ambassade de France en Italie, Musée du Berry, Bourges (F), Raphaël Zarka

Back image: Raphaël Zarka, *14 views of Gibellina Nuova*, 2011, 16mm film transferred to HD, 3'30", location shot



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Studiolo, 2011 Wood and formwork plywood 54 x 70 x 43 cm Installation view from Gibellina, CAN, Neuchâtel, Switzerland, 2011, Photo: Sully Balmassière



Ufficio, 2011 Wood and formwork plywood 43 x 73 x 24 cm Installation view from Gibellina, CAN, Neuchâtel, Switzerland, 2011, Photo: Sully Balmassière



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La déduction de Giovanni Battista, 2011 Birch plywood and offset ink 172 x 140 x 3 cm Installation view from Gibellina, CAN, Neuchâtel, Switzerland, 2011, Photo: Sully Balmassière

Cover image: Alberto Burri, Cretto, photomontage (detail) c.1980, Museo Civico d'Arte Contemporanea of Gibellina Nuova. From Marcel Joray, Le Béton dans l'art contemporain 2, 1987, Éditions du Griffon, Neuchâtel, Switzerland



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