

**Abensour, Dominique.** — «Ensemble». — **Aires de migrations / Migration areas : Raymonde April / Michèle Waquant.** — Quimper-Montréal, Le Quartier, Vox, 2005.— P. 5-7— also in English : **Together.**— P. 5-7

## **Together**

### **Dominique Abensour**

In 2002, Raymonde April and Michèle Waquant were invited to exhibit their work together in Quebec. The idea for bringing them together came from Chantal Boulanger, the director of the Centre d'exposition de Baie-Saint-Paul, who has long been familiar with their work.

The project might have consisted in placing two solo shows side-by-side, which would have made it possible, for example, to put recent developments in their work into perspective. But the artists did not see it this way. Each of them was drawn to the term *together* and began to think about what has connected them for nearly thirty years. *Together* was a history made up of shared moments, of discoveries, travels, friends in common, and also the uninterrupted exchange of ideas on their photographic and video work; *together* was also a geography which seemed to follow the meanderings of the St. Lawrence River, passing Quebec City, where they met in the 1970s, and Montreal, where Raymonde settled, and stretching all the way to France, where Michèle moved in 1980. By rummaging in the past and present of this in common, a vast territory of enquiry opened up and an ambitious project took shape; for what was at stake was nothing less than to cross their respective itineraries, biographies and image practices.

In 2004, Le Quartier offered to join in and to produce the exhibition, which was first presented in Quimper and then in Baie-Saint-Paul, before ending up in Montreal, where VOX, centre de l'image contemporaine, under its director Marie-Josée Jean, exhibited it in 2005.<sup>1</sup> The present volume reworks the elements of this unprecedented exhibition, so precisely conceived by the artists. By linking their work to a multitude of documents with widely varying sources, it displays their images practices as they envision them.

The first phase of their project generated an unexpected piece, the *Albums*: eighty identical notebooks shared by the artists to trace the history of their respective families. Two impressive collections of photographs, handed down through five or six generations, are archived and commented on here. The earliest images date from photography's beginnings. These pictures, to

which have been added other documents (reproductions of works of art for one and record covers for the other), were a part of their formative years. Some of them, separated from the rest, leave behind their documentary status to be exhibited as works of art in their own right.

The second phase of their work, which grew out of their own photographic archives,<sup>2</sup> gave rise to a *Fonds photographique*. Some five hundred photographs, arranged chronologically, bring two constantly overlapping twenty-year trajectories face to face. We can see in this work complicities and coincidences between two bodies of work each with a keen interest in the everyday, in the things of daily life. We can also see how each of these artists' pictures grasps onto reality in a very personal construction. In an entirely natural manner, a dialogue is created between these two gazes in the *Couples d'images*, the works created out of this collection by the two artists working together, pairing chosen photographs from each of their archives.

This endeavour would not be complete without the inclusion of two works produced for the exhibition. They are emblematic of each artist's project. Raymonde April's *Inconsciencés*, with its sequences of photographs, tests the distance between the document and fiction, between the person and the character. In her video piece *Zwin Zwin*, Michèle Waquant observes at length birds of prey alongside her father's war pictures. She stages the way the present is cultivated by the past, whose image, like memory, overlaps and displaces real events. These two works create links between them through their personal ways of addressing related subjects, such as landscape, memory, time and the representation or function of the image. The artists discuss their work in an interview with Chantal Boulanger. The digital publication, produced by VOX, centre de l'image contemporaine, provides video documentation of the exhibition and also makes it possible to consult a selection of videos produced by each of the artists.

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<sup>1</sup> At Le Quartier in Quimper from 29 January to 27 March 2005, at the Centre d'exposition de Baie-Saint-Paul from 16 April to 11 September 2005, and in Montreal at VOX, centre de l'image contemporaine, from 3 November to 18 December 2005.

<sup>2</sup> To the extent that Michèle Waquant does not include her video work in the exhibition.