

Michel Houellebecq exhibits for the first time in New York

By Thomas Romanacé , Valérie Duponchelle | published On 24/05/2017 at 06:00



After *Staying Alive* , at the Palais de Tokyo in 2016, a shrewd, obsessive and banal film director, the famous French writer exported to the United States with a new version mixing photomontages and immersive soundscapes. His name is seller: *French Bashing* .

The metaphysical pessimism of the most widely read French writer of our time, Michel Houellebecq , will cross the Atlantic to stop in New York. The young gallery that rises, *Venus over Manhattan* , will host from June 2nd to August 4th *French Bashing* , the first exhibition of the author of the *Elementary Particles* in the United States. The title is resolutely provocative, as its acid and read author, too, in New York.

As in the Palais de Tokyo in Paris in 2016, with its self-portrait, which became an exhibition entitled, *Stay Alive* , this New York installation will include photographs, photomontages and immersive soundscapes.



Staying alive was already opening up a pessimistic and critical vision of Europe, sometimes periurban and glaucous, sometimes tourist and sinister.

As in the Parisian labyrinth devised in concert by the writer and his high commissioner, Jean de Loisy, the walls of Venus over Manhattan will be clothed in black with soft light to amplify the immersion of the visitors. The writer wanted to reinterpret the concept of his first exhibition and, once again, blur the tracks between literature, photography and cinema. Fans of the writer, regulars of contemporary art installations returning from the 57th Venice Biennale and the curious will be invited to enter the complex brain of the novelist, to discover his mental space, his fantasy universe and his vision Of a dreary France, lost and in decline.

The logical continuation of Rester Vivant

French Bashing is the logical and exportable continuation of this first retrospective exhibition in Paris by Michel Houellebecq, an ambivalent temperament, Narcissus without illusions who looked at his past life with nostalgia and complacency. This smoker until the disaster had even encamped in the heart of his itinerary so personal a smokehouse with black decor and design of the films of the 1950s police.

In Rester Vivant , a UFO of art that touched his goal from June 23 to September 11 , 2016 , his fan club and the young audience of the Palais de Tokyo found, in a succession of stifling rooms like the impasse where the hero dies, All his obsessions, his ironies, his enjoyments, his manias, his sad eroticism, and his troubles with a rather literary flavor.

On the plateau of France 2 , the Goncourt prize had recently resumed the French news on the flight and assessed the balance of the last months heated presidential campaign. For this rather unforgiving observer of contemporary manners, those who hesitated between Marine Le Pen and the white vote in the second round of the election “belong to peripheral France”, the one he depicts in his dreary photographs where there is no Not a living soul. It is this desolate image of the Hexagon that he put into perspective in his artistic installation.

Metaphysical Emptiness of the Modern Individual

Common to the two exhibitions in Paris and the United States, here is the most eloquent photography entitled Europe . The American visitor will discover this image taken in Calais, a few years before the crisis of the migrants, and yet devilishly premonitory. It shows a simple concrete construction of the word “Europe” against a background of gray sky with simple lampposts. An explicit summary of Houellebecq’s opinion of the European continent: a sad, insipid, weak society, called to its gradual disappearance, like this ugly, utilitarian and too rapidly constructed structure.

From the burning atom spraying the sixty-eighth myth to the quest for failed transcendence and the resultant atonement of the cynical hero of Submission , the metaphysical vacuum of the modern individual left bloodless by ultraliberalism which the novelist coldly decrypts in his novels. Documentary value? The French Bashing exhibition does not forget that the art market is part of this capitalist world. Venus over Manhattan now has its antenna in California with Venus over Los Angeles, an address that counts in the new art districts that have developed downtown. Next stop, Hollywood?