

PORTUJAL



PETITE PLANÈTE

07.05.2022 - 29.07.2022

**IÑAKI BONILLAS · GILDA MANTILLA & RAIMOND
CHAVES · HELENA CIVIT · COLLECTION PETITE
PLANÈTE (Ed. CHRIS MARKER) · PATRICIA
DAUDER · DORA GARCÍA · ANA JOTTA · JOCHEN
LEMPERT · MATT MULLICAN · XAVIER RIBAS
EDUARDO RUIZ · DANH VÕ**

PETITE PLANÈTE

The exhibition's idea and title comes from the *Petite Planète* travel book collection of Editions du Seuil that, between 1954 and 1964, counted with the invaluable contribution as editor, author, designer, photographer - or all these functions together - of renowned French filmmaker **Chris Marker** (1921, Neuilly-sur-Seine – 2012, Paris). These supposed “guidebooks”, each dedicated to a different country or territory, were characterized by being rather counter-tourist guides, an unorthodox and more open way of approaching other cultures, other places, containing many literary and cinematographic quotes, rather dissident historical approaches and images of diverse sources. According to Marker they were: “Not a guidebook, not a history book, not a propaganda brochure, not a traveller's impressions, but instead equivalent to the conversation we would like to have with someone intelligent and well versed in the country that interests us”.

The *Petite Planète* books are not just a literary project, but also an artistic one. The choice of the images on the covers, the thoughtful distribution of the text and the image on the pages, as well as the choice of colour and the use of two-colour printing, makes the guides quite unique. The series is playful in its style frequently employing poems, song lyrics, cartoons and a colourful illustrated map on the back end pages. As for the content of its images, the sources are very diverse, but the collection stands out for the photographic contributions of Marker himself and some of his colleagues such as Agnès Varda, William Klein and Cartier-Bresson, as well as Robert Capa and Brassai. The books have been considered as “collages”, even as “fake cinema” by Marker himself, what could be seen as the prelude and the field of experimentation for an entire aesthetic and political proposal that will develop in some of Marker's works, in movies such as *Sans Soleil* (1983) or in books such as *Le Depays* (1982).

In *Petite Planète* there is an intention of rediscovering the world, by shaking it, by linking images and texts dialectically, to generate unexpected new meanings. There is a search for a vision that distances from the notion of the world offered from the tourism point of view or by the scientific and linear narratives of an encyclopedic text. There is also a political hint in the books, a desire to reactivate past revolutionary images that have been forgotten, that have been censored, that have been completely museified or transformed into merchandise. A certain humanist spirit persists in the collection. The gesture of a promise that would seem ingenuous today: to get to know each other better within our differences, within our erratic histories, our mythologies. Opening up to the world with a certain revolutionary naivety, understanding the world and ourselves through the most insignificant or everyday instant: through the cartoon that appears in a Tunisian newspaper, the image of a cat in a Japanese home or the inability to pronounce a word in Greek.



Trois promenades — outre-
sibles à travers la paysannerie
ont leur trajet dans le passé.

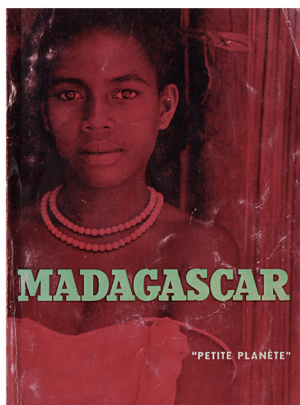
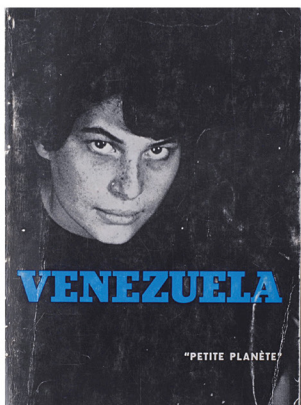
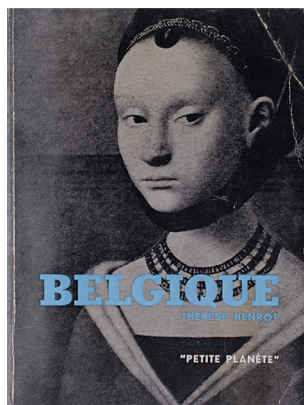
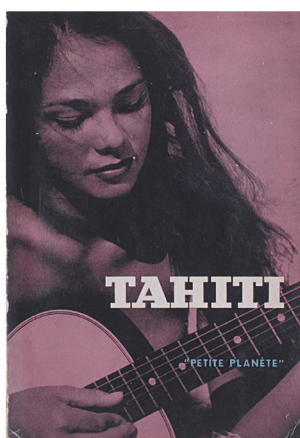
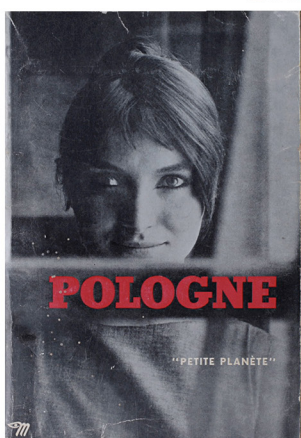
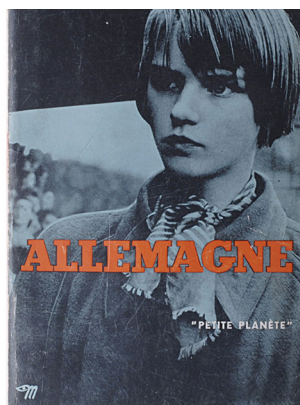
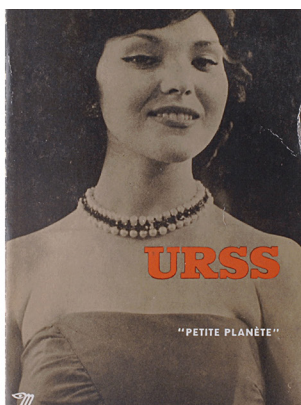
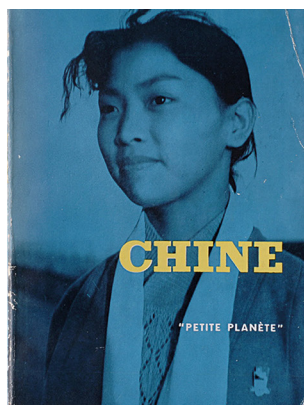
La première, celle de l'histo-
geste de l'Empereur, fils du C
dans la terre Han. Elle se ter-
Tsé-Toung écrite pendant la g
parce qu'il va à l'encontre des be-
nistes, pouvons résoudre le probl
Entre le geste et l'écriture, un
et de requêtes politiques. Le m
jamais.

— Le grain est la source de

— Sans l'agriculture le pay-
brigands.

— Les princes sages vénèrent
le jade.

PETITE PLANÈTE



Collection Petite Planète (1954-1967)

Along with the book collection, *Petite Planète* presents works that allude, from very different perspectives, to this “small world”. A diverse constellation where works of a documentary nature, or with a certain political character, share space with other works of a poetic or evocative nature, no less suggestive for that. Migration, travel, science fiction, references to nature, to distant planets, are notions present in the exhibition.

The exhibition begins with just one work, **Dora García’s** (1965, Valladolid, Spain) performance *Two Planets Have Been Colliding for Thousands of Years*, which will be held only on May 3 and 4. The piece is the result of a conversation between the artist, Andrea Valdés and Manuel Asín in which the image of two planets colliding for thousands of years until they became one emerged. For Dora García, this image was a perfect description of the relationship between poetry and philosophy. The artist borrowed this idea and turned it into the setting for an extremely simple and contemplative performance, one with no fixed duration, no clear beginning or end. The work consists of a space on the ground that is defined by two non-concentric circles (the planets). The outer circle is painted white and inside it lays the other circle, an off-centered hole. Two people with some physical similarity stand in each of the circles, they agree on a distance and they lock their gazes, keeping eye-contact all along the performance. Each gesture, each change in the position of one of them, will be replicated by the other to continue maintaining the initial distance. Neither of the performers can step on the territory of the other. The strength of the work lies in its simplicity. It all comes down to the intimate exchange between the performers. The observation of the two figures orbiting slowly and silently in their circles, this kind of mandala or spiritual geometric arena that facilitates concentration, can also be a meditative experience for the viewer.

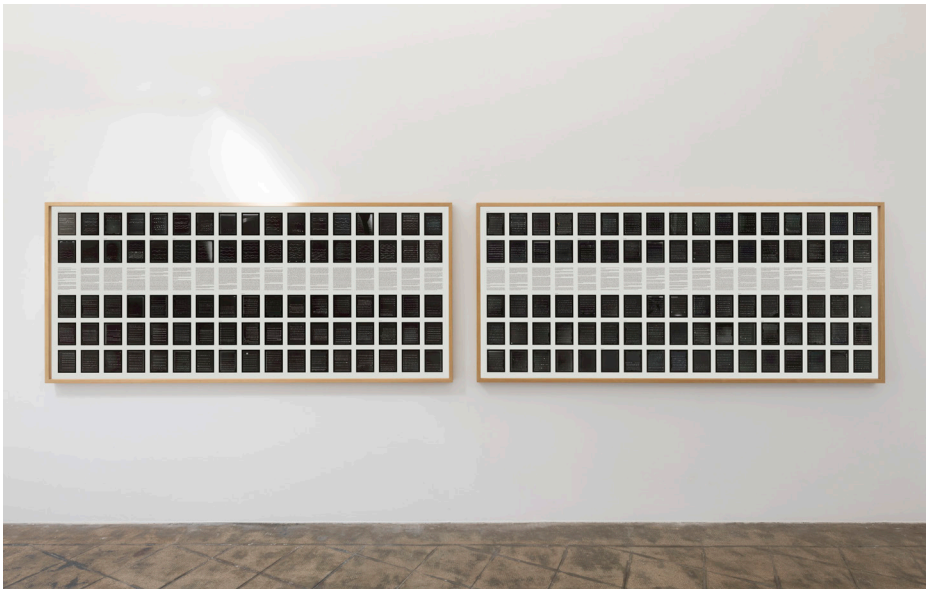
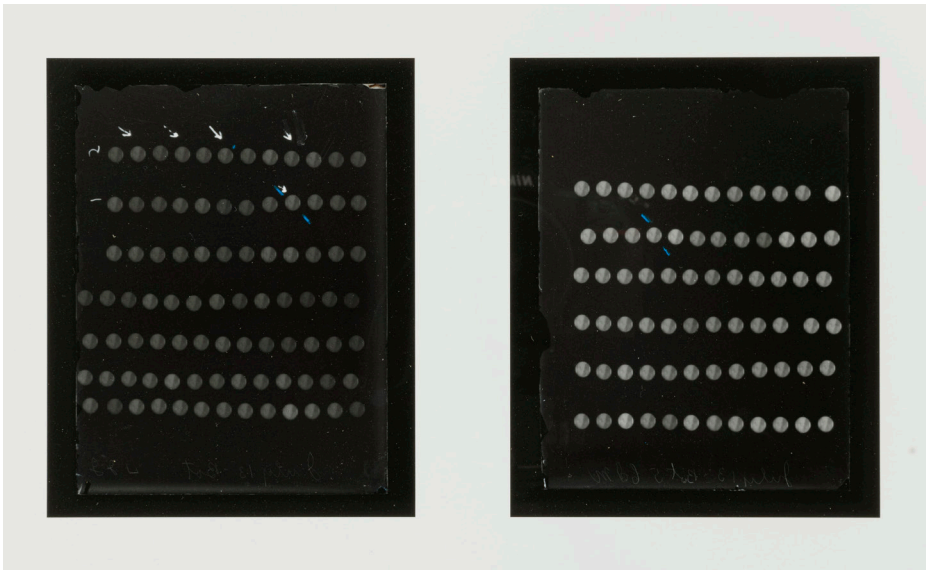
On the day of the opening, May 7, all the works in *Petite Planète* will be added to what will remain of García’s performance, the “two planets”.

In the short film *Toute la memoire du monde* (1956) by Alain Resnais (Chris Marker’s collaborator and friend), a *Petite Planète* book dedicated to Mars appears in several shots. We never get to see the contents, just the cover and the index. It is not known for sure if the book ever existed or if it was just a dummy, a prop for Resnais’ documentary.

This peculiar interest of Marker for having made at least one fake book dedicated to Mars led us to include at least one reference to this planet in the exhibition: *Three Moves Are As Bad As A Fire* by **Xavier Ribas** (1961, Barcelona, Spain). This is a diptych that shows 170 photographic plates of Mars taken by The Lowell Expedition



Dora García, *Two Planets Have Been Colliding for Thousands of Years*, (2017)
Performers: Matilde Amigo and Lyncoln Diniz



Xavier Ribas, *Three Moves Are As Bad As A Fire* (2013)

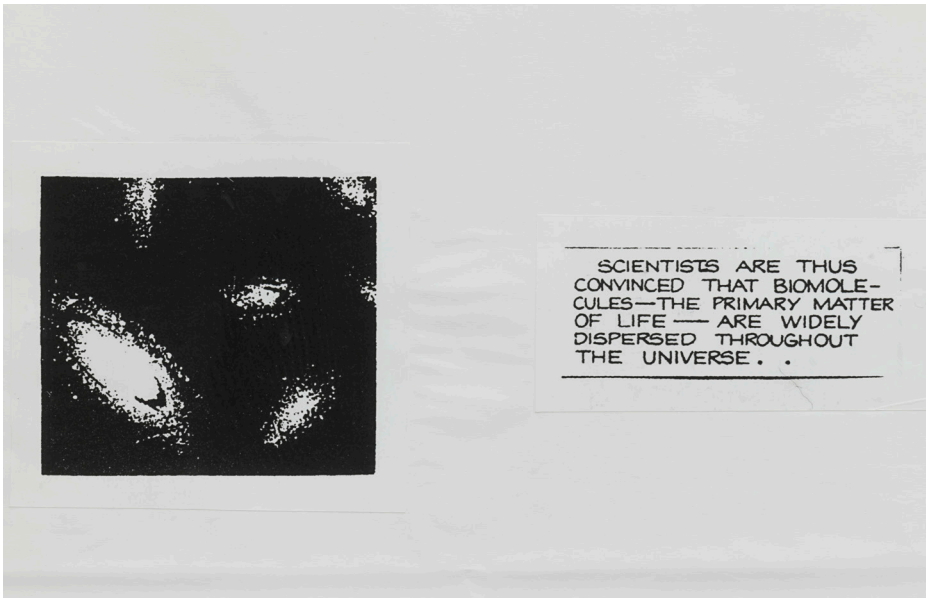
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in the Andes in 1907, sponsored by Percival Lowell, a wealthy amateur astronomer and writer. Around 1907, Mars embodied a utopian vision of scarce but shared resources and advanced, intelligent beings. An ancient planet that seemed to have lost most of its water. Lowell wanted to find signs of a planet whose inhabitants had built huge irrigation works to transport the water that melted from the polar ice caps to irrigate the hot and desert lands of the equator. A utopian vision of a society that would have overcome 'national' differences in order to manage and share the planet's scarce water resources. The images are accompanied by 90 texts that narrate the experience of the expedition, fragments of later research works and magazine articles, in addition to these speculative descriptions about the life of the inhabitants of Mars.

The fiction about the origin of the world and the reference to other planets is also found in *Untitled (Physical laws within the picture. 1974)* by **Matt Mullican** (1951, Santa Monica, USA). The work, part of the *Representing the Work* series, brings together eight vignettes of cut-out images and texts from North American comics that allude to contemporary life and to the creation of the world, but also to the field of entertainment, science fiction and popular culture. In Mullican's words: "I was interested in the depiction of a physical reality within the fictional framework of cartoons — in a sense, going into where Superman lives, and breaking down that reality. Diagnosing the air and the water that exists within this comic book reality which we, as a culture, participate in. The atmosphere as it exists in the cartoon is related to the atmosphere of dreams and the atmosphere of pictures." These vignettes are part of the book *Try and beat this, Mars*. The book cover reproduces a work of 1974 with the same title.

The drawing *País Portátil* by **Gilda Mantilla & Raimond Chaves** (1967 Los Angeles, USA; 1963, Bogotá, Colombia), belongs to their monumental and most emblematic project *Drawing America*, the result of a trip through several Latin American countries, between 2005 and 2009. The title comes from Adriano González León's book, a well-known writer associated to the Venezuelan avant-garde of the 1960s. On their way through Caracas, the artists got the book and recognized the influence of reading it. The words in the old book constantly reminded them of what they were seeing and encountering, as if the past or the fictional text was interweaving with their same travel experience. In the drawing, a very simple iconography, associated with Venezuelan geometric abstraction, almost an emblem of the visual culture of this country, is combined with texts copied from González León's own book.

The work *Les Maliens (A script)* by **Patricia Dauder** (1973, Barcelona, Spain) consists of a series of drawings that were conceived to make an animation film that would



Matt Mullican, *Untitled (Physical laws within the picture. 1974)* (Detaille) (2019)

Patricia Dauder, *Les Maliens (A script)* (2005-2006)



Gilda Mantilla & Raimond Chaves, *Pais Portátil* (2005)

receive the same title. The project takes as its starting point the impressions of the artist taken from television, movies, from some books – never after a direct real experience. Dauder's *modus operandi* leads us to remember one of the writings that most influenced the visual arts of the 20th century *Impressions of Africa*, which translated Raymond Roussel's impressions of a geography he never visited, Africa precisely. The drawings of *Les Maliens (A script)* present suggested landscapes, vegetation fragments, palm trees, possible local architectures. Each drawing consists of several overlapped drawings on semi-transparent paper, that Dauder conceived in this way to create dissolves between the film frames. *Les Maliens (A script)* is a mental representation of a place. Mali becomes a distant country of which there are only documentary references.

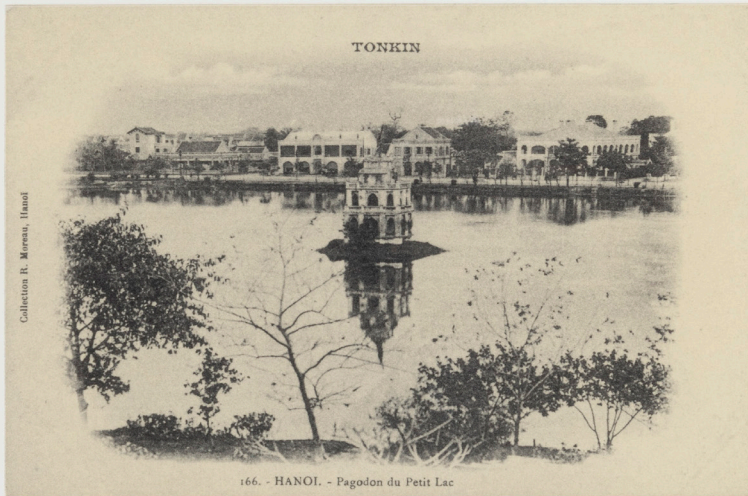
In the collage *Portugal* by **Ana Jotta** (1946, Lisbon, Portugal) she invents a country playing with the word of her birthplace. The word "Portugal" in coloured painted letters is laid out on a found barbecue charcoal bag. The resulting image is simple and clumsy. Full of irony, humor and wit, Jotta's work is somehow an emblem or a flag, the image that would represent this country. By replacing the letter "G" by "J" she also makes her initials present in the country's name, her signature, as she usually does in many of her works. *Portugal* can only be understood as an exercise full of humor, a small irreverent comment to her country's name or an innocent playful gesture that would remind one of childhood behavior, to play with the real Portugal or create a Portugal separated from the real world, Ana Jotta's own one.

The idea of an image that transports us to another world and refers us to a place between the real and the imaginary, is also perceived in the work of **Iñaki Bonillas** (1981, Mexico City, Mexico) (*Détail*), *Windows*. A series of black and white slides showing details of classical paintings, fragments that always refer to the windows that appear in them. Those half-invisible worlds, that are behind, in the background, that invoke a reality outside the field that may well be imaginary or may be the representation of a real place that existed historically.

The idea of an image linked to memory and to an historical document also reverberates in **Danh Võ**'s work (1975, Bà Rịa, Vietnam). In *08.01.1945*, the artist presents a photogravure of an old postcard of the city of Hanoi with a Buddhist temple, on top of which there is a small-scale replica of the Statue of Liberty. The statue was apparently placed there sometime after 1887 during the French colonial occupation and later relocated to various locations around Hanoi. Finally, it was torn down and melted down on August 1, 1945, after being considered a vestige of French colonial rule. This is the date that Võ uses as the title of his work.



Iñaki Bonillas, *(Detail), Windows* (2013)



Danh Võ, 01.08.1945 (2016)

Eduardo Ruiz, *Passepartout (Danaus plexippus)* (2017)

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Eduardo Ruiz (1990, Sant Boi de Llobregat, Spain) presents two works in the exhibition. Two collages where a piece of wire from an airport fence is superimposed to one page of a Spanish passport. Curiously, the artist chooses the pages in which references to the natural world appear. These are illustrations of migratory species: the monarch butterfly, in *Passepartout* (*Danaus plexippus*), a species that travels 5,000 kilometers each year from southern Canada to Mexico to hibernate, and the salmon and the stork in *Passepartout* (*Salmo salar*; *Ciconia ciconia*). An administrative document necessary to allow (or block) the transit of humans between territories, is linked to the migration of animals that in turn can be disturbed by human action. Metaphorically, the idea of travel is interwoven with the natural world, bureaucracy, and the immigration policy.

The link with the natural world appears again in the works of **Helena Civit** (1997, Villach, Austria). In the two etchings of the “Capsula” series, structures similar to a seed are drawn, as if broken or half-open. Images that can evoke the origin of organic life. Capsules, seeds, sheaths or shells, curiously, like the planets, usually have an spherical or elliptical shape. The sculpture *Niu* (nest) takes us to the idea of habitat, but also to that of a protected space as in the “Capsules”. A nest, in this case, not circular and built with layers of plaster that are arranged in all their fragility on top of two parts of a hive.

Finally, a work by **Jochen Lempert** (1958, Hamburg, Germany) of the series *Symmetry and Architecture of the Body*. A photograph taken in the mid 90's in one of his many trips to Japan that could very well be associated with the images taken by Chris Marker himself. An image shows us four girls smiling at the camera, in the middle of a Japanese traditional celebration. The spirit of Lempert's work recalls, in a certain sense, that of the French filmmaker, in terms of the appreciation of the everyday and the way in which the little things around us are poetized.



Helena Civit, *Niu* (2019)
Jochen Lempert, *From series Symmetry and Architecture of the Body* (1997-2005)

EXHIBITION'S WORKS AND ARTISTS

Collection Petite Planète (Ed. Chris Marker) (1954-1967)

Dora García, *Two Planets Have Been Colliding for Thousands of Years* (2017)

Xavier Ribas, *Three Moves Are As Bad As A Fire* (2013)

Matt Mullican, *Untitled (Physical laws within the picture. 1974)* (2019)

Gilda Mantilla y Raimond Chaves, *País Portátil* (2005)

Patricia Dauder, *Les Maliens (A script)* (2005-2006)

Ana Jotta, *Portugal* (2022)

Iñaki Bonillas, *(Détail), Windows* (2013)

Danh Võ. *01.08.1945* (2016)

Eduardo Ruiz. *Passepartout (Danaus plexippus)* (2017), *Passepartout (Salmo salar; Ciconia ciconia)* (2017)

Helena Civit. *Niu* (2019), *Càpsula nº 3* (2019), *Càpsula nº 4* (2019)

Jochen Lempert. *Symmetry and Architecture of the Body* (1997-2005)

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Paul Lofeodo. *Liquid Shade: Gaze Screening and the Spirit of Performance in Dora García's Two Planets Have Been Colliding for Thousands of Years*. Artículo publicado en PHI Antena, 2021

Ricardo Nicolau. *Impresiones de África. Imagen después de la imagen en las películas y en los dibujos de Patricia Dauder*. Ed. Consorci del Museu de l'Empordà, 2008

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