



GALLERIA CONTINUA

SAN GIMIGNANO BEIJING **LES MOULINS** HABANA

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NIKHIL CHOPRA

Drumsolo at The Mill

URIEL BARTHÉLÉMI & NIKHIL CHOPRA

Floating cities & loaded dice

Opening on Sunday, April 30, 2017, as from noon
 Exhibition from April 30 to September 30, 2017

On the 7th of April 2017, at the corner of Archimideus and Tripoleos Streets, Nikhil Chopra began a performance called *Drawing a Line through Landscape* for DOCUMENTA 14, a two-headed festival this year, in Athens and Kassel, drawing a line of both fracture and unity between Mother Greece and conquering Germany.

This line tracing today's dislocated European borders is also the path that Nikhil Chopra has taken in order to draw his own line, that of an imaginary landscape capable of raising a panorama (from the Ancient Greek *παν* – all, and *όραμα* – view), taking in Ioannina, Tsarino, Sofia, Gorna Lipnitsa, Cozia, Budapest, Štúrovo, Bratislava... After covering more than 3,600 kilometres of thousands-of-years-old history, the panorama will be revealed in Kassel, in an abandoned train station. The underground Hauptbahnhof will serve as a temporary shelter for the relics of this voyage, the walls as its journal.

The nomad-artist will be called

Will (a not insignificant name, given the meaning of the verb in English) and will ask an essential question of his practice: that of the potential for transformation contained in performance—in spaces, places, people, and in himself.

In order to accompany his wandering, Galleria Continua / Les Moulins is exhibiting a few notable works from Chopra's journey.

Gedankenfreiheit, a 22 hour-long performance, took place in November 2011 in Sindelfingen, Germany, the industrial town behind the extravagant Mercedes Benz. *Gedankenfreiheit* literally means *Freedom of thought*, an idea particularly dear to Friedrich Schiller. Taking this incitement to freedom literally, Nikhil Chopra begins a performance in a paper military uniform. The fragile envelope tears with his gestures and movements, and reveals his pink underwear: insolence under the uniform like the reminder of a free spirit.

The artist also had an old photograph in mind, a fantastic vision

of the Hohenasperg fortress, which for most of its life served as a prison, notoriously for the Nazis. Schiller also spent time there. In the second part of the performance, Chopra transforms himself into a blond character, a vague recollection of Eva Braun, counterpart of the fallen army's general. After this, he becomes naked, unburdened of all his personae and at last set free.

For *inside out*, a 99 hour-long performance, Chopra went to the small Tuscan village of San Gimignano. Here Chopra, inspired by Benozzo Gozzoli, the painter responsible for the frescoes in the Church of Sant'Agostino de San Gimignano (1464), walked through the thirteenth-century streets to the Cypresses and olive trees in the nearby hills. The Nomad returns: San Gimignano is traversed by the via Francigena, the path taken by the Frankish pilgrims on their way to Rome. A celebration of the majestic old world is embodied by Chopra through a number of personae: the nobleman, the peasant, the pilgrim, all amazed by the weight of the world whose mystery they want to relate by painting it.

Drumsolo at the Mill is a performance that took place at the Moulins itself. Chopra, troubled by the memory of defunct industries, elaborated time and rhythm by implying an action in sound. The elements of the performance included a glittery drum set, buckets of black, grey, and white acrylic paint, and some rather coarse brushes.

Confined in the large space of the old paper factory of the Moulin de Boissy, Chopra plays the drums and creates large drawings while impersonating a persona that recalls the classically rebellious musicians of the 1980s, from Punk to New Wave. The audience is invited to witness the transformations that the performance and the persona traverse as the work vacillates between the audible and the visual. The disillusion

linked to industrialisation's becoming a new tool for alienation and suffering is contrasted with the inalterable beauty of the pure lines of raw steel, of the heady steam of a working machine, and of the beating of a stick against the stretched skin of a drum.

*Floating cities & loaded dice*¹ is one of Chopra's last performances, in response to an invitation from drummer-composer Uriel Barthélémi to make a work for the Gare du Nord in Paris.

During a 3 hour-long performance, they develop a fiction about exiles in France and Europe, a recollection perhaps of Brecht's *Refugee Conversations*, which also take place in a train station, a space daily submerged by intersecting bodies, physical in the extreme.

The huge echo chamber of the Gare du Nord becomes a space of mental projection for the two characters. Chopra creates twin characters, symbols of reunion as much as of ambivalence. Uriel Barthélémi questions the incarnation of sound and music in frictionally psychological frames, such as post-colonisation, or our civilisation's cannibalistic destruction of nature and imaginaries. His music expresses some of the strata from the mental folds in which we find ourselves and attempts to draw out a sphere of freedom for beings in permanent flight.

1. *Floating cities & loaded dice* took place in collaboration with Gare & Connexions and with the support of Césaré, as a part of FIAC, 18 October 2016.