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CONCRETE CITIES

Lawrence Abu Hamdan
Alexander Apostol
Marwa Arsanios

January 9 - March 12 2016
Opening
Saturday, January 9 — 4pm-9pm



Alexander Apostol, *Think Blue*, 2007-2010

*"May our harsh concrete buildings reveal
a thin sensibility beneath them ..."*

Tribute to the Government by André Malraux
Minister of State for Cultural Affairs
September 1st 1965

The twentieth century has devoted the domination of concrete. A building material that gave architecture a new freedom of expression and allowed the creation of unusual shapes and different spaces. Among admirers of concrete's properties, there is Le Corbusier who revolutionized its use to make the highlight of his ideas. Between 1956 and 1960 he built a Dominican monastery entirely made of concrete in Eveux, La Tourette. Here Le Corbusier plays with the gravity of this matter both tough and malleable. Reinforced concrete is also the main theme of his first housing units. In 1952, the first "radiant city" sees the light in Marseille. This construction was only the first of a new type of "radiant cities", both harmonious and close to nature. A life-size model made for the inhabitants' happiness. But, in spite of the architects and town-planners' efforts that aspired to improve the world by creating joyfulness cities, concrete embodies today the monotony and the decline of contemporary suburbs. We

are surrounded by concrete. Everything looks the same and gray predominates.

"Concrete Cities" presents the work of three artists: **Lawrence Abu Hamdan**, **Alexander Apóstol** and **Marwa Arsanios** that use concrete in different ways to reflect on modern cities' architecture.

In the video ***Soy la ciudad* (2005)** by **Alexander Apóstol**, a transvestite evokes the architectural and urban failure of Caracas reciting extracts from the book *Vers une architecture* (1930) by Le Corbusier. The ideal home of the architect strikes the sad reality of a country that, despite the influx of oil wealth, cannot modernize. "We are unfortunate people because we live in unworthy houses" says the transvestite while her makeup deforms slowly disrupting his face and his initial optimism. As to the speech beforehand, the architect's quotes lose meaning, the tie with the city dissolves and the fall of concrete intensifies.

In the 1950s, Chavez Ravine Los Angeles division redevelopment project forced all the Mexican immigrants to leave their homes. Initially, the architect Richard Neutra

Angelino had planned to develop an urban complex named *Elysian Park Heights* with two dozen buildings each thirteen floors high and more than one hundred and seventy two-storey houses as well as playgrounds and schools. But in an anti-communist atmosphere, the project could not be completed and the neighbourhood was obliterated to make way for the LA-Dodgers baseball stadium. The series of digital photographs by **Alexander Apóstol** returns to this complex history by adopting the team's slogan **Think Blue (2007-2010)**. Past and present merge in these images that show the usurpation of a territory for the benefit of the construction of a reinforced concrete symbol.

During the same time, the architect Apostolos Doxiadis Konstantinos is invited by the Lebanese government to develop a national plan of accommodation with the ambition to launch a regional development. He developed eighteen types of innovative and residential buildings that interact with environment by using local buildings materials. But after government changed in 1958, the project was forgotten and any site was abandoned. This failure reflects the selflessness of a political deal with the problems of poor housing. In **After Doxiadis, A Proposal for a New Social Housing Project (2013)**, **Marwa Arsanios** brings back the unfinished project by reproducing two concrete models of housing typologies designed by Doxiadis Costantinos. This installation tries to show what this project might look today. The failure of this project of "living together" in a distant time underlines the disintegration of the Lebanese state.

Lawrence Abu Hamdan looks deep into history to identify auditory events that make vibrations in the city. In **Marches (2005-2008)**, a group of performers wander in urban neighborhoods with modified shoes. Thick wooden heels and nailed soles bring out the sound of the city and create a new map that explores sound perception in the environment and is produced by the raw material of our urban civilization: concrete.

List of works

Marwa Arsanios

After Doxiadis, A Proposal for a New Social Housing Project 2013

- Two models
- Concrete, ceramic, epoxide, wood
- 15 archival documents
- Fine Art paper print

Lawrence Abu Hamdan

Marches, 2005-2008

- Pair of customized shoes
- Print works
- Audio file
- Variable dimensions

Alexander Apóstol

Think Blue, 2007-2010

- Digital photographs
- 70 x 125 cm each photograph
- 70 x 260 cm each diptych

Alexander Apóstol

Soy la ciudad, 2005

- HD video, color
- 1:50 min