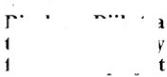


Nov, Dec

Jaargang 6 NO. 29



Ten points on Energy Lithuania



Energy Lithuania tells the story of Elektrenai (Electric City in English translation), the Lithuanian town that was built to maintain a power station, constructed in the area at the end of 60s.

By
Jonas Valatkevicius

VILNIUS, 24 OCT. –

1.1 Deimantas Narkevicius is one of the leading Lithuanian artists of the younger generation.

1.2 Younger generation in the Lithuanian art scene includes artists who have started their careers from the very end of the fall of Soviet Union (around 1988-1990) till now.

1.3 As most of his colleagues, he studied classical art techniques at school and only later turned to new media.

2.1 *Energy Lithuania* is his latest work on 8 mm film, created in 2000.

2.2 It was one of the works shown in the Lithuanian Pavilion at the 49th Venice Biennial this year.

2.3 It makes reference to the other 5 film related works Deimantas has created since 1997.

3.1 *Energy Lithuania* tells the story of Elektrenai (Electric City in English translation), the Lithuanian town that was built to maintain a power station, constructed in the area at the end of 60s.

3.2 Elektrenai has always been the symbol of Soviet industrial development in Lithuania. As any symbol of this kind it has always provoked enthusiasm and romantic visions.

3.3 Its romantic flavour bears witness to the fact that Electric City was once the expression of avant-gardist industrial thinking.

4.1 Deimantas has always expressed interest in nature and the fate of avant-gardist ideas.

4.2 He has already directed his interests in other social spheres of Lithuanian contemporary life, as the culture of this country has always been well behind any avant-gardist movements.

4.3 Contemporary perception of modern history naturally has become one of his main points of interest.

5.1 Totalitarian history is still one of the hottest issues in any post-communist state.

5.2 Prevailing attitudes toward the not so distant past is blind negation of anything that evokes totalitarian memories. The dominant theoretical attitude is the division of the world into black and white, which is a clear left over of totalitarian thinking from the Cold War era.

5.3 The totalitarian past of post-communist countries is erroneously opposed to the democratic past and present of the post-Western world.

6.1 Deimantas in his films performs actions contrary to the mechanism that produces ideological stereotypes.

6.2 Social stereotypes emerge not only because of a lack of historical knowledge, but also by eliminating the personal experience of history.

(advertentie)

Tentoonstelling Exposition 15/11-22/12
Vernissage 14/11, 18-21 u/h

**DEIMANTAS
NARKEVICIUS**

**ENERGY
LITHUANIA**

Galerie Jan Mot

Rue Antoine Dansaertstraat 46 B-1000 Brussel Bruxelles

6.3 Any governing body loves to use social stereotypes to rule the masses, although it might seem that this is more typical of totalitarian systems.

7.1 Both Deimantas and the heroes of his films present their personal point of view.

7.2 The subjective dimension allows the artist not only to present his position, but also to avoid another imperative: the stereotypical social discourse – to relate universal and indisputable *Truth*.

7.3 His films also give an alternative and effective vision of history of post-communist societies.

8.1 It would be wrong to define his territory of interests with only post-communist world, although his prime interest is in the social discourse of his immediate environment.

8.2 A lot of social stereotypes were created in both the post-East and the post-West after the fall of Berlin Wall.

8.3 These stereotypes are of the same nature (see points 5.2-5.3)

9.1 The world is not divided the same way as it was ten years ago.

9.2 The world is divided, but the main principles of this division are still unknown to us.

9.3 We all live in one space, tormented by the recent memories of social brainwashing.

10.1 *Energy Lithuania* is a tender metaphor for the disguised cruelties that any citizen of Western Hemisphere could relate to.

10.2 *Energy Lithuania* is an invitation to remember and learn to face what we would rather forget.

10.3 *Energy Lithuania* is one of the possible methods to cure secret the wounds that we have inflicted to ourselves.

Galerie c/o Cinéma

Films by Narkevicius in Cinéma des Galeries

On Sunday November 18 at 11.30 AM the following films by Deimantas Narkevicius will be screened at the Cinéma des Galeries (Galerie Saint-Hubert) in Brussels: *Legend Coming True*, 1999 (Super 8mm film transferred to video, 68 min.), *His-story*, 1998 (35 mm film, 7,5 min.) and *Europe 54° 54' - 25° 19'*, 1997 (16mm film, 8 min.). In the presence of the artist. Entrance free.

by

Raimundas Malasauskas

The Beginning: Legend

After a few seconds of cinematic silence¹, the voice of a small girl bounces off the screen. This invisible child re-tells – in Lithuanian – the founding legend of the city of Vilnius², as concocted by romantic 19th century historians. The soft, supple celluloid darkness transports us back to the city's pre-history, not yet invested with meaning, not yet haunted by existential or collective remembrance. This childhood legend evokes a historical figure – the nature-loving Gediminas, Grand Duke of Lithuania. It is dark on the screen, and our prince is having a strange dream: an iron wolf is howling on a mountain. He wakes up and re-tells the dream to his soothsayer, Lizdeika, who then explains its meaning: where the dream took place, a glorious city will be built. It will be prosperous, at peace with the world, and the rumour will spread – amplified to wolf-like, heavy-metal decibels – of its might and

honour. The prince seems to believe in this utopian reading of his dream³. The screen is lighting up, little by little. The sun, shining in through a window, helps the girl to find the last words in the open book. This is the beginning of Deimantas Narkevicius' film *Legend Coming True* (1999).

From Legend to History

Fade-out. The Lithuanian stuttering of the girlish voice gives way to the high-pitched voice of elderly woman speaking in fluent, Yiddish-tinged Russian. The narrative unfolds in calm, almost hypnotically rhythmic fashion. Later on, we will experience how this voice is occasionally lost for words, but the intense coherence of her story lasts throughout the whole film. The voice belongs to Fania, an old Jewish resident of Vilnius who survived the Holocaust in this legendary city. Although she is the protagonist, she remains invisible in the film, just like that other historical figure – the legendary prince.

"1939, when Vilnius was handed back to



Deimantas Narkevicius, *His-story*, 1998

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Gediminas, Grand Duke of Lithuania. It is

the Lithuanians, my uncle came here from Kaunas (. . .) " This is where our first person's monologue begins. Childish legend is replaced by mature history. A street-light twinkles on the screen.

We learn that Fania has lived in Vilnius since 1927, when her family moved there from their native Kaunas. She went to school in Vilnius, and then she became a village teacher. But she soon returned to the city. Ten days later, the war began. A fenced-in Jewish ghetto was set up. Fania ended up there, with 20,000 others. In spite of the repressions, there was a resistance movement inside the ghetto. A unified guerrilla command was established. Weapons were clandestinely bought from the Germans, and there was underground rifle practice, while sabotage actions were organised out in the open. In Paneriai (Ponary), the mass killings of Jews had started, but our protagonist managed to escape from the ghetto five minutes before it was sealed. After this, most of its people were exterminated. Fania left the city, she and a friend tried to find the guerrillas, and they were finally accepted to join the cell named after Adam Mickiewicz, the Polish-Lithuanian romantic poet. She stayed on, fighting. There, she also got to know her future husband. Back in camp after her missions, she used to listen to a record of *Rhapsody in Blue* together with the other fighters of her cell. In 1944, her father was killed in Estonia, and a ship that carried her mother was sunk in the Baltic Sea. After the war, Fania stayed in Vilnius. She worked in the Institute of Statistics until 1990. In 1990, when she visited Israel for the first time and met her relatives, she was given a photograph of her mother pregnant with her.

Geography, Topography, Space-Time

The story spans an extraordinarily vast territory — Kaunas, Vilnius, Israel, Varena, Tadzhikistan, Italy, Latvia, Paris, Australia, Toronto, Siberia, Stutthof, Los Angeles, Paneriai. The extensive network of a scattered Jewish community. But the fundamental topography of the film is made up of four aspects of Vilnius: the childhood street, the school facade, the ghetto yard and the Rudninkai forest. This visual structure of the film merits separate analysis. Together with the complex inter-connections in time and the dramatic narrative, this topography helps to create the fundamental effect of *Legend Coming True*.

In those four locations around Vilnius, all of them dramatically associated with Jewish history, Deimantas Narkevicius had a camera rigged for 24 hours. The camera was programmed to shoot one frame every minute. In this way, the 24 hours of shooting became 14 minutes of viewing. The result is similar

to animated film.

"1939, when Vilnius was handed back to the Lithuanians, my uncle came here from Kaunas (. . .) " This is how our first person's monologue begins. A street-light twinkles in the darkness of the screen, and then it fades, stroboscopically. At daybreak, the cupola of the Vilnius synagogue and the nearby street are pulsating, frame by frame, in the oblique sunrays. The shadows and fragmented clouds twitch neurotically, much like the stuttering bodies of passers-by. The light is boiling over. A 3D-animated and speeded-up version of Claude Monet would probably look like this. Again, the atoms of darkness multiply in space, and gradually hurl themselves at the screen. Fania's story rolls on. The day is already breaking in another location.

These are four days and nights, compressed and wrapped in a story that takes more than an hour to tell. And our protagonist brings together the whole 20th century in the time of her story. In the beginning of the film, mythical time is being spoken, and at the end there is a performance of meta-historical hope. This multi-dimensional temporal structure must be a necessary tool for bringing us as close as possible to the *truth of the event*.

The End: From History to Hope

The fourth night ends in the killing fields of Paneriai. It is dark. "If there would have been no hope, I am not sure I would have survived", says Fania. After that, we hear a third language — Yiddish. Chasia Spannerfleig, another surviving guerrilla veteran, sings the song that became the anthem of anti-Nazi resistance movement, Never Say by Irsha Glik. After all the stroboscopic landscapes, a woman's face now appears on the screen.

The De-Patriarchalisation of History

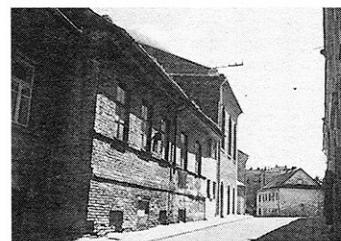
Although the prince and his soothsayer at the beginning of the film were both men, Deimantas Narkevicius' main character is a woman. The personal and collective history of the community is spoken through her. As we know, history is traditionally written by men, and the heroes of classic epic films are almost exclusively male. (In classic Hollywood cinema, even flashbacks by women are usually framed by the unchallenged institution of the male voice.) Since Fania is a real person, and not a fictional construct, it is clearly demonstrated that Deimantas Narkevicius is according the right of speaking in the *voice of truth* to the "abused." (But of course we must not forget that the author is himself a man.) It is this real person who saves us from the attempts to look for "history through our own popular images and historical simulacra" (Frederic Jameson).



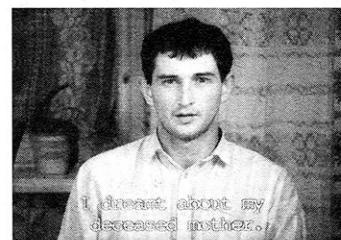
Deimantas Narkevicius
Legend coming true, 1999



Deimantas Narkevicius
Legend coming true, 1999



Deimantas Narkevicius
Legend coming true, 1999



Deimantas Narkevicius
His-story, 1998

The other level of compensation is socio-political in nature. It is legible to those who know Lithuania's history – or rather: its different versions. Without going into all the details of a chronicler, we should remember that those who took part in anti-Nazi resistance were the heroes of history in the Soviet period. (Apart from their symbolic authority, they also enjoyed special social privileges.) When the political regime was changed and Lithuania became independent, the hero status was awarded those who took part in anti-Soviet resistance 4). People like Fania became outsiders in this society.

As nationalist ideology made its comeback in history, the outside world was alarmed by the unwillingness of Lithuanian officials to publicly acknowledge Lithuanian participation in the Holocaust. ("The war began. But it was not the Germans who started walking around people's flats, but Lithuanians with white ribbons", our protagonist remembers.) There was no moment of collective atonement. Instead, there were even attempts at subjecting the multi-national history of the capital city to a form of ethnic cleansing. At a time when the "Jewish Issue" has become lopsided, Deimantas Narkevicius tries to give a voice to those who lost their privileges, and to remind us about the ideas of social and historical justice.

Time, Memory, Reconstruction

The image techniques we have discussed – the streams of light that organise memory in this film – suggest that we should interpret

its use of time in photographic terms. To watch *Legend Coming True* is like flicking through an album of photographs at high speed. (In her narrative, Fania often mentions photography as a prosthesis for memory.) It would not be wrong to compare the operations of memory to *shashshots in time*.

In a certain way, the photographic time of Deimantas Narkevicius, memorialised in this cinematic format, can be connected to Chris Marker's *La Jetée* (1962), where the photograph is also the primary signifier of memory. But in spite of their equally complex time structures, the two works differ fundamentally. *La Jetée* is based on the concept of parallel time, whereas *Legend Coming True* employs linear historic time. The main character of *La Jetée* is "glued to the image of his past", and he is sent back and forth into the past and future, in order to save the present. Narkevicius' protagonist delves into the past in order to save the future, i.e. the collective project of the Future. History is not re-written, but re-filmed, with the objective of organising the future more rationally and correctly, and to serve not only the interests of the ruling class or the dominant ideology.

The historicist approach of Deimantas Narkevicius is elaborated in his other films – *History* and *Energy Lithuania* – which make liberal use of the pastiche. Here, a concrete period in history is visualised with "period" visual techniques, i.e. older technologies of film production and screening.

It is obvious that the end of history envisaged by Baudrillard has encouraged many

artists – particularly towards the end of the 1990s – to engage in highly interesting artistic revisions and reconstructions of history. Just a few examples: the re-enactments of Rod Dickinson and Eran Schaerf, the historical loops of Pierre Huyghe and Simon Starling, the photographic restorations of David Claerbout. In spite of their historicism, the revisions of Deimantas Narkevicius should also be analysed in this context.

Rescue and Heroism

The protagonist of *Legend Coming True* rescued herself and others. The author of the film is rescuing several things: the ideas of history, truth and civic responsibility.

The End

Imagine Deimantas Narkevicius as the soothsayer. What would he have told the prince?

Notes

1 *Legend Coming True* is an 8 mm film demonstrated in video format.

2 The capital of Lithuania.

3 Just think: what would have happened if the soothsayer Lizdeika would have been an expert in, say, psychoanalysis, instead of classic hermeneutics?

4 The best example is the Guerilla Street (*Partizanu gatve*) in Kaunas, which – unlike most other politically motivated streetnames – was left unchanged by the new political regime. But it is clear that the name now refers to something completely different.



BRUSSELS, SEP. 13, Opening Rineke Dijkstra, Galerie Jan Mot and restaurant Kasbah (video stills: Manon de Boer)

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Quatre questions à Herman Daled

Interview par **Jan Mot**

BRUXELLES, OCT. 20 -

Pour la série consacrée aux collectionneurs, sous le titre 'What to do with art?', nous avons eu l'honneur de poser quelques questions à Herman Daled, collectionneur d'art contemporain vivant à Bruxelles. Cet entretien, qui est probablement le dernier de notre série, a eu lieu par fax et e-mail, entre le 10 et le 20 octobre 2001.

1. Une caractéristique du collectionneur, c'est son désir de posséder. Dans le contexte de l'art conceptuel, cette idée de posséder s'est transformée. Pourrait-on dire que l'achat d'une œuvre d'art était plutôt de l'ordre de signer un contrat entre l'artiste et le collectionneur que d'échanger de l'argent contre un objet, vu que dans certains cas c'était impossible de parler d'objet? Comment décrirais-tu la nature de ce contrat?

Tu affirmes qu' "une caractéristique du collectionneur c'est son désir de posséder". Le désir de posséder des objets animés ou inanimés est une vice dont l'humanité entière est entâché (et non pas seulement les collectionneurs) à des degrés éminemment variables et concernant les domaines les plus divers (une femme, un homme, un animal domestique, de l'argent, des biens mobiliers et immobiliers et pourquoi pas aussi de l'art).

Certains biens dits intellectuels tentent de se soustraire à ce désir de possession à savoir e.a. la littérature, la musique, l'imagerie mobile mais le démon du désir de possession, toujours à l'affût et efficacement

encouragé par le monde du négoce, permettra par exemple de transmuer le lecteur en bibliophile... (afin de créer de la valeur surajoutée).

L'œuvre d'art se particularise parmi les autres valeurs intellectuelles par le fait d'être tributaire d'un support qui la transforme en objet singulier. Ce support matériel stimule et conditionne le désir de possession et détermine sa valeur commerciale.

L'art conceptuel ambitionnait e.a. de faire fi de l'aspect matériel des productions artistiques mais se trouvait confronté au problème initialement non résolu des transactions qui ont trouvé leur aboutissement dans la rédaction de certificats et de contrats. Il y a lieu d'admettre que les œuvres produites par des artistes conceptuels ne sont pas de nature à assouvir pleinement ceux qui sont animés d'un ardent désir de possession. Elles suscitent plutôt auprès de ceux qui leur présentent de l'intérêt un désir d'accompagnement qui se traduit par une transaction financière amenant à l'acquisition mettant un terme harmonieux à la relation entre l'artiste et l'acquéreur.

*On ne trouve que ce qui s'y découvre.
On ne découvre que ce qui s'y trouve.*

Pareille situation aurait pu se répéter avec la photographie ou la vidéo où le rôle habituellement prédominant de l'objet se trouve aussi relégué au minimum sinon au néant. Il faut croire que le marché de l'art a tiré les leçons de l'aventure / la mésaventure de l'art conceptuel et a pris les devants en mettant en place une série de dispositions et de mesures singularisant ces productions afin d'assouvir

les désirs de possession de ceux qui sont disposés et à même d'en payer le prix (connu).

J'estime appartenir à ceux qui sont devenus collectionneur et n'ont jamais ambitionné de l'être. Le libraire demande-t-il à l'acheteur d'un livre s'il ambitionne de se constituer une bibliothèque?

2. Rétrospectivement tu as trouvé quatre principes prévalant à la constitution de ta collection. A savoir: uniquement des œuvres d'artistes vivants, jamais du second marché, ne jamais vendre d'œuvre, des artistes achetés alors qu'ils ne sont pas encore ou à peine connus. Ce que l'on peut déduire de ces principes, c'est que par ta collection, tu soutiens principalement la partie "créative" précédant la phase "productive" de l'art. Tu as tout de même déclaré que par la vente d'une ou deux œuvres qui sont stockées ailleurs, tu pourrais aider un grand nombre de jeunes artistes. Qu'est-ce qui te retiens de te séparer d'une œuvre de ta collection?

Il est vrai que l'idée m'est venue de vendre au moins une oeuvre ayant une valeur marchande certaine et de réinvestir ce montant dans des acquisitions de travaux contemporains. L'idée de cette transmutation me séduit car elle permet d'effectuer par le biais d'une transaction financière une opération de type alchimique en régénérant une oeuvre reconçue du passé en des propositions artistiques actuelles qui auront à leur tour à affronter l'épreuve du temps permettant ainsi de ne pas cantonner le collectionneur dans le rôle de conservateur mais de lui permettre d'être un opérateur.

Si cela ne s'est pas fait à ce jour c'est que je

n'en ai pas éprouvé la nécessité pour répondre aux sollicitations auxquelles mes déambulations dans le monde de l'art actuel me soumettent. Toute contrainte est salutaire - fut-elle financière - et amène à opérer des choix de façon plus réfléchie.

3. Plus d'une fois, j'ai entendu un collectionneur dire qu'il est le seul dans le monde de l'art à ne pas dépendre financièrement de celui-ci; Qu'il est le seul véritablement libre de ses actions et que, comme tu l'affirme également, il ne doit de compte à personne. Cependant le collectionneur ne peut pas toujours acheter ce qu'il veut, pas uniquement pour des raisons financières mais aussi à cause du rôle des galeries dans le marché de l'art. Elles peuvent décider à quel collectionneur une oeuvre sera vendue. Dans ce cas, le prestige et le pouvoir du collectionneur jouent également un rôle. Comment trouve-tu que le rôle des galeries s'est développé dans les dernières décennies?

Je n'ai jamais été - et je dis bien jamais - dans la situation où un refus m'a été opposé de la part d'un artiste ou d'un galeriste lorsque je me proposais d'acquérir une oeuvre. Dans l'ivresse commerciale qu'ont connu les galeristes dans les années 80 (et où ils avaient perdu un peu la boule) ils n'employaient en effet plus le vil mot vendre mais déclaraient (sans humour ni sentiment de ridicule) "qu'ils acceptaient bien volontiers de vous céder / confier" l'oeuvre convoitée.

Peut-être en sommes-nous revenus actuellement à cette situation sous l'effet du matraquage médiatique tous azimuts qui fait employer certains collectionneurs sous le poids de l'effet de la mode savamment concocté et distillé par le marché qui s'est adapté à notre

société de (sur)consommation.

Par voie de conséquence, plus cela se vend, plus c'est demandé (règle fondamentale du mécanisme omniprésent de la mode) et plus cela devient cher (voir certains tirages photographiques à 15 exemplaires ou plus dont le prix de vente augmente de façon progressive au fil des ventes). J'imagine que c'est à ce niveau que le galeriste peut opérer des sélections parmi ses candidats acheteurs. Le monde des galeries se trouve à un tournant où je crois que ne persisteront que les mega-galeries (à même de rivaliser avec les géants du second marché) et les petites structures à même d'accueillir les productions des artistes les plus contemporains (telle la grande distribution et les night-shops) qui toutefois se tourneront progressivement, pour faire connaître leurs travaux, vers des supports qui leur paraissent plus adéquats et qui sont les magazines dits alternatifs qui pullulent de plus en plus et amalgamant tous les phénomènes de société vers lesquels leurs intérêts les portent (people, politique, fashion, design, sexe, musique, etc.)

4. Même si comme tu dis, ta collection est la conséquence inéluctable de ton désir de participation active à la vie artistique, il doit y avoir eu un moment où la collection est devenue une entité, une substance avec une signification en soi. Ce que je voudrais te demander est : est-ce qu'il y a eu ce moment, cette période où tu as pris conscience de la collection comme quelque chose qui existe hors de toi, et où tu as voulu, à travers des achats très précis, rendre l'ensemble plus cohérent, plus clair? Considère-tu, en d'autres termes, la collection comme une oeuvre propre, un "work in progress"?

A ta question j'aimerais opposer ce que je m'amuse à intituler le "complexe du collectionneur de timbres" qui doit débuter sa démarche par l'acquisition d'un album, objet maléfique dont la rédaction a été opérée par ceux qui détiennent le pouvoir philatélique et qui par le biais de ses pages pré-imprimées lui fera vivre de façon permanente les tourments et les affres de la frustration engendrés par la petite case encore / toujours vide le privant d'avoir la série complète... (et parfois, quand-même, aussi d'éprouver la suprême joissance d'avoir enfin réussi son coup puisque tel est sa finalité de collectionneur... de timbres).

Les collections publiques se doivent au vu de leur mission patrimoniale et didactique d'avoir le souci de la complétude. Certains collectionneurs privés ambitionnent de faire pareil. Ce n'est pas et n'a jamais été mon cas. Je considérais plutôt que l'ensemble des œuvres qui se sont accumulées au fil des années comme un échantillonnage fait au hasard des rencontres, sur les tracés des parcours suivis sur la scène artistique. Il en résulte une hétérogénéité (pour faire chic on pourrait dire éclectisme) qui m'est indifférente au sein d'une homogénéité qui résulte du fait que les déambulations ont toujours évolué sur une même parcelle du vaste monde de l'art.

On ne trouve ce qui qui s'y découvre. On ne découvre que ce qui s'y trouve.

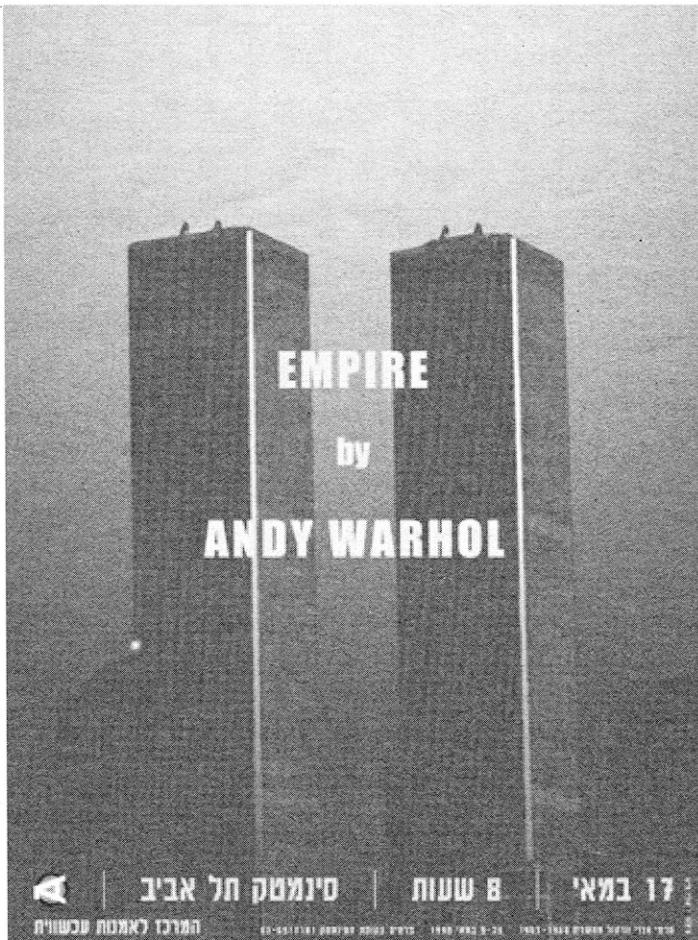
Et à ne pas confondre avec l'action de rechercher qui presuppose la poursuite d'un but et la production d'un effort.

Dans cette optique particulière, il peut être estimé que la collection reste évolutive mais dans sa linéarité chronologique en ce sens que ce qui s'y ajoute relève de la création actuelle et ne remonte jamais dans le temps.

You are also cordially invited to dinner in the company of the artists taking part in CASINO 2001. This will be held in the Kuijke at 8 pm on the day of the opening.

The price of a seat at this buffet dinner is 61.97€/2500 BEF per person. Your payment will allow us to invite the artists to dine in your company. If you would like to attend the dinner please transfer this sum before mid-





Twin Towers by Uri Tzaig

This poster was made for the occasion of the screening of Andy Warhol's Empire at the Tel Aviv film museum in May 1999. The image of the twins buildings was chosen because it was far too expensive to use the original image of the Empire state building taken from Warhol's movie, but also because of my interest in twin structures throughout my work.

After printing this poster I've noticed that

Warhol himself decided to make this 8 hours movie on the same day it was announced that the twins would be build, much higher and central than the Empire. He wished to make a memorial for the "old lady". The relations between the twin buildings and the title "Empire" gets some new meanings nowadays. UT

For sale at the gallery. (35 € /signed)

