

ASPECTS OF CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY

IN THE **FLORENCE &
DAMIEN BACHELOT**
COLLECTION

SALON
de la
PHOTO

PORTE DE VERSAILLES
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Series "Nantes seen by", 2013
© Ambroise Tézénas

ASPECTS OF CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY

IN THE FLORENCE & DAMIEN BACHELOT COLLECTION

Florence and Damien Bachelot have been collectors for over 15 years.

The choices they make are highly personal, inspired by emotion or sudden passion. These seasoned collectors purchase works they find in international fairs, in galleries, in festivals or simply through their many encounters with artists. Many of the works in their collection reflect mankind's vision of his environment and the manner in which he has transformed it. The recurring themes they are drawn to express nostalgia for the passage of time and the ephemeral traces of human activity, revealing a contemplative, mysterious and meditative world.

The collection houses prints by many celebrated photographers: Henri Cartier-Bresson, Lewis Hine, Saul Leiter... as well as several lesser-known figures in 20th-century photography. Their selection focuses above all on rare vintage prints but also on groups or series by the same author, which allow a better understanding of a photographer's vision. The couple's passion has also led them to support and encourage young artists whose work they admire. Focusing on the contemporary period of this vast collection, starting in 2000, the Salon de la Photo wishes to honour these passionate collectors who, unaffected by the influence of fashion, accompany both French and international photographic creation. Florence and Damien Bachelot, while encouraging and supporting photographers in their personal projects, also share, through generous loans, the wealth and future of present-day photography.

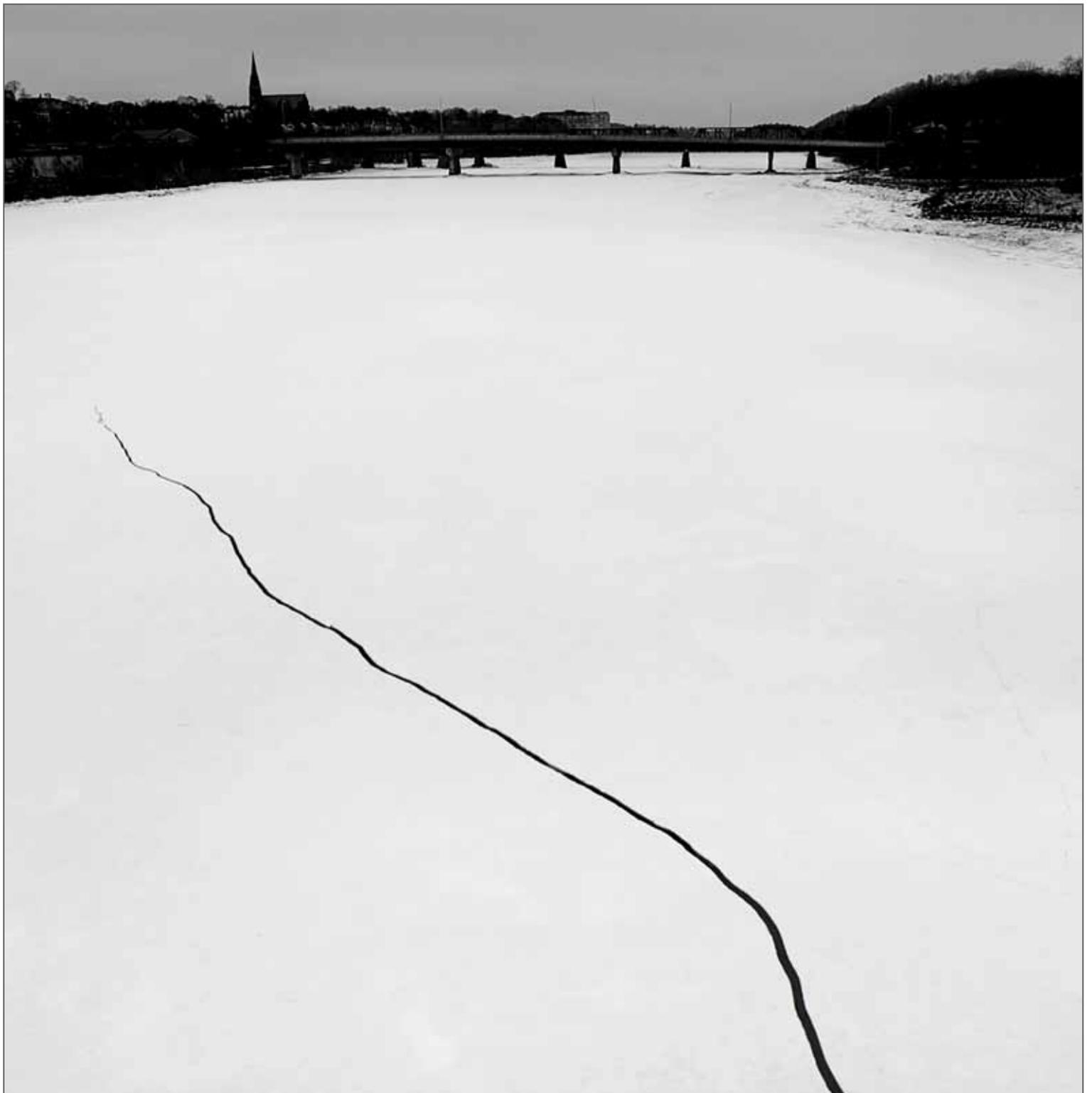
Simon Edwards

Artistic Director, Salon de la Photo

PHOTOGRAPHERS EXHIBITED AT THE SALON DE LA PHOTO

Helena Almeida, Marco Barbon, Bachelot-Caron, Matt Black, Mohamed Bourouissa, Adrien Boyer, Edward Burtynsky, Philippe Chancel, Cyrus Cornut, Stéphane Couturier, Thibaut Cuisset, Bernard Descamps, Mitch Epstein, Véronique Ellena, Florence Faucon, Gianluca Gamberini, Nan Goldin, Paul Graham, Laura Henno, Nicolas Henry, Nadav Kander, Adam Katseff, Floriane de Lassé, Andrew Moore, Jürgen Nefzger, Ann Ray, Lisa Roze, Trine Søndergaard, Ambroise Tézénas, Danielle Van Zadelhoff, Guillaume Zuili.





«Ice crack in a frozen river» U.S.A.
Bangor, Maine 2016
© Matt Black / Magnum Photos

INTERVIEW

WITH **FLORENCE &
DAMIEN BACHELOT**

by SIMON EDWARDS

June 14, 2019

SIMON EDWARDS - Florence and Damien Bachelot, I am very happy to meet you today at your home in Ville d'Avray. How did you become collectors?

DAMIEN BACHELOT - We became collectors not by chance, yet without realising it. We are both passionate about art, but we did not plan to become art collectors. Ever since we were newlyweds, we've always gone to see exhibitions, but not necessarily on photography. We discovered photography through a strategic consulting project I did for Hachette-Filipacchi. The group had purchased the photo archives of important French photo agencies such as Gamma or Rapho. This was back in 2004. With my associates at the time, we decided to buy photographs to hang on the walls of the company offices. My wife, who was not professionally involved in the company, also took part in selecting the works. Our interest in photography grew and in 2008 we decided to buy the collection belonging to the company. At the same time, we also started to acquire works on other themes, and since then have continued putting together this body of work. It was merely the view of outsiders that determined it was a collection. We did not start out with a typical collector's approach, but now certainly we do, as we consider our collection to be an « object » we are building and that has coherence.

S.E. - Do you sometimes disagree on the choice of works to be acquired? If you were to choose separately, would you choose the same images?

FLORENCE BACHELOT - From time to time we disagree about things in everyday life, but when it comes to photography not that much (laughs). Quite often we enjoy making choices separately while going through an exhibition or an art fair, and often our choices concur. I function differently from Damien. Damien is very analytical. I am more about falling in love with a piece. Still, we are often attracted to the same things.

S.E. - Why photography rather than painting; was it by chance?

D.B. - There is an element of chance, but we chose photography at a time when it began to shift into another realm, a time when it was still possible to buy masterpieces at extremely reasonable prices in a market that was starting to open up. That's how we were able to acquire the exceptional ensemble of works by Saul Leiter. This remained possible because photography was then a relatively recent art form, which has now gone from a means of visual expression to a much sought-after art form for collectors. For a long time, even the greatest photographers may have considered themselves to have a great eye, but not as creators of artworks.

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S.E. - When you go to an art fair, do you know beforehand which artists you want to see, or is it more a question of discovery?

F.B. - That is more Damien's approach than mine, I like to let myself to be guided not by chance, but by the people I meet.

D.B. - I think in the fairs, it's more a question of art dealers. We go to see the galleries we know will have something that will interest us, and they play the role of *passeur*, of go-between. In reaction to what Florence just said, I feel there are two aspects: when we are really sure of what we like, we're on the same wavelength. I am more on the side of dealing with the budget, so sometimes we may not agree on how much we want to spend on something. But when it's just a question of personal taste, we come together quite often.

S.E. - You were talking earlier about budget. Do you set a limit for yourselves?

F.B./D.B. - Oh yes!

F.B. - When I start choosing, I dream about buying so many pieces! But we have to draw limits.

D.B. - That's really the problem, but at the same time it means we go straight to the point. We may have some means, but not those of the most prominent French collectors, so when we go to Paris Photo or to an art fair, we make choices and have to accept that we can't buy everything. When it comes to contemporary photography, we make a choice of « works ». Some are no longer destined to be exhibited and are often stored away because we don't have museum-like conditions at home. We prefer to have a beautiful vintage print rather than a piece that weighs 50 to 80 kilos that we might see in exhibitions.

S.E. - You search for the highest quality prints that are both flawless and rare, don't you?

D.B. - In contemporary photography, the prints are obviously recent so we are very careful in our choice of the print quality and also in the edition size. When, for example, we are told that for one image there are 8 large-format prints and 3 small ones, we tend to back away! We own a unique print by Helena Almeida, which for us is really interesting. When an edition goes beyond 5 or 6 prints, we start feeling uncomfortable. We are very cautious in our choices.

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"Precious Silence", 2015
© Danielle Van Zadelhoff

S.E. - The exhibition that we are preparing for the Salon de la Photo is focussed on the contemporary part of your collection, which runs from around 1900 up to the present day. When discovering this part of the collection, one is struck by an underlying theme. Alongside the portraits, you notice that several artists working on the motif of landscape are asking questions about the traces human beings leave with the passage of time. These are living artists whose work you like to follow regularly. How does collecting contemporary work affect your search for the best examples of an artist's work?

F.B. - The artists we meet and the bonds we form with certain photographers are essential, I feel. Meeting Stéphane Couturier or Véronique Ellena for example, was very important on a human level; these were real encounters and they are very interesting people. There is also the great debate about whether an artist is different from the person, or is the way we look at the person different from the way we look at the artist? I have to admit that we have had some very enriching encounters with artists and that for me is very important.

S.E. - This also allows you to follow and support certain artists. The profession is not necessarily in very good health at the present time, many things have changed - the printed image in the press, internet and digital photography, etc. What was the attraction to showing the contemporary part of the collection?

D.B. - First of all, this is the first time we are considering the contemporary section as an entity. The fact that someone with an outside perspective of the collection finds a recurring theme is stimulating. We learn a lot from another person's vision from this experience. Most of the time in exhibitions of the collection, the contemporary works are less brought to the fore than the master works of the history of photography. That said, there are some big names among the contemporary works, like Paul Graham, Mitch Epstein, Nadev Kander or Nan Goldin, but there are also many young artists and that is important for us.

F.B. - In Toulon, it was interesting to see works by Adrien Boyer on the same wall as Harry Gruyaert, they seemed to work well together.

D.B. - The intimate series by Adrien Boyer we have just bought, which has rarely been shown, is magnificent. These small-format prints make us realise that you don't need huge prints to produce quality photographs.

S.E. - On that point I do notice that you have many large-format works in the contemporary section, Nadav Kander, Mitch Epstein, Stéphane Couturier. Has the trend of the last few years influenced you at all?

F.B. - I'm not sure that we can say that this trend for monumental work has influenced us much, it's not the real intention of the collection. It's true we have been attracted to work by contemporary photographers and they happen to print in large format. We don't consider ourselves victims of that, however. It's an interesting point because I don't really know why or when this trend started.

D.B. - I think that there are two things connected to this: a question of technical innovation and a question of the market. For the first, with digital technology you can achieve such a high quality of printing that it's now possible to make larger prints. Second, it's easier to sell a large-format work at a very high price and I think many buyers feel they are getting their money's worth (*laughs*).

S.E. - What is interesting is the mixture of large format and small format in the collection like the series by Philippe Chancel for example.

D.B. - We have evolved in that sense. In the beginning, we bought large-format prints with an eye to where we would put them and then we began buying different formats simply because we fell in love with an artist's work. Placement and presentation became secondary.

S.E. - How do you feel about showing this collection to a large public?

F.B. - It's quite surprising for us, because we actually rediscover our own collection. There are photographs that we never see because they are in archival boxes and it's exciting to see them displayed on the walls. Then there are the works we look at every day and pay somewhat less attention to and there again, it's a joy to see them in another context. There are also the exchanges with the public which are quite emotional and enriching on a human level.

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INTERVIEW

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DAMIEN BACHELOT**
by SIMON EDWARDS

"Leonardo with his grandfather"
Palazzo Papadopoli, Venezia, 2010
© Nan Goldin



B.D. - We also rediscover the collection through the eye of the curator, someone who gives the collection a new perspective. Even if sometimes we are not necessarily in agreement, it's thrilling for us. It's like sharing a really good bottle of wine - drinking it alone is not as enjoyable as sharing it with others. When you suggested organising this exhibition for the Salon de la Photo I was very excited and now look forward to meeting the public and hearing their reactions. I already know exactly what happens when 30 or 40 international collectors and art experts come to look at the collection. It's always very flattering. On the other hand, the reaction of a new public to the collection...

S.E. - *How do you envision the evolution of this collection in the years to come? Will you continue to acquire rare 20th-century photographs or will you concentrate more on contemporary photography?*

D.B. - I think that if we continue to have the financial means we will continue in the same direction as before, that is, more and more rare photographs and a quest to find young talent. I think we'll buy fewer large-format prints due to lack of space. On the subject of rare 20th-century work we were recently able to purchase an ensemble of photographs by Pierre Molinier - using a model other than himself - which is quite exceptional, both in the quality of the prints, the quality of the images, the rarity of the work and the humanity they emanate. The coherence of this ensemble, even though we do not have any nudes in the collection (and not because we are puritanical) is exactly what we are searching for. When you have this work in your hands, even if it is a little different in terms of the collection, you are sure that it has real meaning and is a real work of art, it's stunning.

S.E. - *I find that in the contemporary section there is always a subtle human presence with an underlying sentiment of suffering. A look towards the past and man's imprint left on the landscape. In this sense, the work of Thibaut Cuisset comes to mind. He recently passed away. Did you know him personally?*

D. B. - Yes of course, we were able to help him financially some time ago on one of his book projects. Thibaut had a deep sense of humanity, he was also very reserved.

We have a diptych and a triptych by him which will be shown in the exhibition. For me, he depicts the landscape with a human dimension, whether it be totally absent or present because of its absence - it's a quite rare and important form of questioning.

S.E. - *In the exhibition there is a small space dedicated to two artists who work together, the Bachelot-Carons. Can you tell us a little about the link you have with these artists and why members of your family appear in certain works by them?*

D.B. - Louis and Marjolaine? We are very close, Louis is a cousin, he's almost a brother to me. It's sometimes difficult to have artists in one's entourage. For Louis and Marjolaine, it's completely different. We can separate family ties from their work as artists. There's a double side to their story, Marjolaine is the daughter of one of France's great photographers, Gilles Caron. The couple has worked together relentlessly to preserve and archive his work. We have many of his prints in the collection from the solo exhibition he had in Mantes. He was much more of a photo agency photographer, like Depardon. We have one print from 1968 and the only other surviving example is in the collection of the Pompidou Centre.

When you look at the work of Louis and Marjolaine, you know straight away who it is, they have really invented their own style. Similarly, if you have a print by Saul Leiter in your hands, you know immediately that it's his work. That is very rare in photography. People who have the ability to invent their own visual handwriting are rare. They worked for some time in the world of illustration and staging their own environment. These are artists who can transcribe feelings and place them in the image. In the photograph they made of our family, I can truly recognise my children and my world. It's a real connection between us.

F.B. - They have a very specific and fusional way of working. The film made about them is fascinating, the way they put things together and communicate with each other.

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S.E. - Will you one day create a foundation for this collection?

D.B. - No, I think that we would rather give the collection to a museum, preferably a French one. We've already had requests from foreign museums. For us the collection represents a whole, which is coherent only if it is kept together. We would not want it to be dispersed or to be gathering dust somewhere in a museum. In an ideal world (and I know some people would shriek at this), I would like there to be a museum for only photography and not for photography, video and all the new technical advances in image making. A little bit like the one the François Cheval created in Chalon-sur-Saône. There was a department there dedicated to the collections, a department for artists' exhibitions, a department for the history of the camera and photographic objects and an emphasis on conservation. We see ourselves going more in that direction, in a museum that would dedicate a permanent space to the collection.

S.E. - What is your advice for future collectors?

D.B. - I would say basically that you should collect what you like without trying to build a collection or depending on the opinion of others. Put together something which will gather value with time. Buying and selling art works is quite a different profession, which we could perhaps consider nowadays because we have an access to the market, but it's not our intention. When we opened the boxes of prints by Saul Leiter in New York, we bought them, not because it was some sort of investment, but because we really loved the work of this lesser-known artist at the time. We decided to buy the complete set. One day a journalist asked me, « Why did you buy that? ». In the word « that » there was such contempt, because he found that it was of absolutely no interest whatsoever. We did not think twice about it. I would say to the person, « Follow your intuition and buy what you like and don't listen to others. So long as it gives you pleasure, that is the most important thing ».

We never intended to organise exhibitions or publish books, but today, with such a large body of work in the collection, - and I come back here to your first questions - it's certainly a way of prolonging our enjoyment of photography and sharing what we are really passionate about



"Asmara Dream #35"
Courtesy gallery Clémentine de la Féronnière
© Marco Barbon



"BP Carson Refinery", California 2007
Courtesy galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne
© Mitch Epstein

THE COLLECTION

FLORENCE & DAMIEN BACHELOT

The **Bachelot collection** is founded on a certain sensitivity towards the quality of its vintage prints and offers an eclectic visual palette of images from around the world. The collection is made up of photographic prints from the Humanist period of French photography (Doisneau, Brassai, Boubat...), on the landscape testifying to the human presence, American photography, street photography with a particular emphasis on the framing and geometry of the image and the originality of the photographer's eye.

THE COLLECTORS

Florence Bachelot is a doctor at the Institut Curie in Paris.

Damien Bachelot is a company CEO.

The couple is in their 50s.

THE COLLECTION

2004: first acquisitions

NUMBER OF PHOTOGRAPHS IN THE COLLECTION

800 (analogical and digital)

PERIODS

20th/21st century from 1900 to the present day.

Main body of the collection: Works from 1920s, 1930 to 1960 – Humanist movement, street photography and contemporary photography.

SUBJECTS

The city, French Humanism, man and the environment, nature, stilllife, portrait.

MORE THAN 120 ARTISTS' WORK COLLECTED INCLUDING

Les Frères Lumière (autochromes), Matt Black, Edouard Boubat, Marcel Bovis, Bill Brandt, Brassai, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Gilles Erhmann, Jacques Henri Lartigue, Stéphane Couturier, Luc Delahaye, Mitch Epstein, Saul Leiter, Nan Goldin, Gilles Caron, Bruce Davidson, Mario Giacomelli...



EXHIBITIONS OF THE COLLECTION SINCE 2009

- **Saul Leiter, *Dancing in the Street***
February 21 to May 31, 2009, Chalon-Sur-Saône - Musée Nicéphore Niepce
Curator: François Cheval
- **Saul Leiter, *Early Color***
March 13 to November 20, 2011, Lausanne - Musée de l'Elysée
Curator: Sam Stourdzé
- ***Photographs of Florence & Damien Bachelot***
November 13 to 25, 2013, Phillips - Paris 75007
Curators: Florence, Damien Bachelot & François Cheval
- ***Une Photographie sous tension (Photography Under Stress)***
The collection of Florence and Damien Bachelot
February 15 to May 18, 2014, Musée Nicéphore Niépce - Chalon-sur-Saône
Curator: François Cheval
- ***Des Villes et des Hommes (Man and the City)***
February 10 to April 22, 2018, Toulon Hôtel Départemental des Arts - Centre d'art du Var
Curators: Françoise Docquier & Ricardo Vazquez
- **Daegu Photo Biennale 2018**
Cars
September 7 to October 16, 2018, Korea - Daegu Art Center
Curators: Ami Barak et Françoise Docquier

"The noise of the world", 2010
© Bachelot-Caron



Untitled, Adjamé, Abidjan 2017
Courtesy gallery Clémentine de la Féronnière
© Adrien Boyer

Interior # 12, 2010,
Courtesy the artist, Martin Asbæk Gallery & Bruce Silverstein gallery
© Trine Søndergaard



USA, Datazone Flint 19 Série Drive Thru 2015
Galerie Catherine et André Hug
© Philippe Chancel

"Urban jungle", 2017
Courtesy galerie Clémentine de la Féronnière
© Guillaume Zuili



SALON
de la
PHOTO

LE SALON DE LA PHOTO VU PAR REIKO NONAKA

DU 7 AU 11 NOVEMBRE 2019
PARIS PORTE DE VERSAILLES

DÉCLENCHÉUR D'IDÉES
TESTER • PHOTOGRAPHER • S'INSPIRER

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