



Eric Baudelaire MATRIX 257 FEBRUARY 4 –21, 2015
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY ART MUSEUM & PACIFIC FILM ARCHIVE

MATRIX 257 is the first of several nomadic projects that will take place in various off-site locations while BAM/PFA prepares to move to its new building in downtown Berkeley. The exhibition features the work of French-American artist Eric Baudelaire (b. 1973), who lives and works in Paris. Baudelaire's work explores intricate facets of representation through a keen unraveling of entangled narratives.

The exhibition unfolds in two parts: film screenings at the PFA Theater on February 4 and 5 and the presentation of *The Secession Sessions* at Kadist Art Foundation in San Francisco from February 7 to 21. In his films *The Anabasis of May and Fusako Shigenobu, Masao Adachi and 27 Years Without Images* (2011) and its sequel, *The Ugly One* (2013), Baudelaire complicates the distinctions between documentary and narrative genres to reflect on the real and imagined memories of the protagonists, whose lives become dislocated in time and place. *The Anabasis* examines the intertwined stories of Japanese New Wave filmmaker Masao Adachi, who joined the Japanese Red Army in Beirut in 1974, and May Shigenobu, daughter of the leader of the same left-wing revolutionary faction. For *The Ugly One*, also set in Beirut, Baudelaire collaborated with Adachi on the storyline, which pivots around two lovers and former resistance fighters who attempt to remember and make sense of their pasts.

The Secession Sessions explores another place caught in a contested narrative—the disputed region of Abkhazia, located along the eastern shores of the Black Sea, about which Baudelaire states: “To many observers, Abkhazia is simply a pawn in the Great Game Russia and the West have always played in the Caucasus.” Consisting of a new film, *Letters to Max* (2014); a performative “Anembassy” of Abkhazia open to the public and staffed by the former foreign minister of Abkhazia, Maxim Gvinjia (also the star of the film); and a program of conversations and public events, *The Secession Sessions* invites visitors to investigate questions of statehood and representation through the prism of the stateless state of Abkhazia. Baudelaire establishes an open space for discourse and contemplation, while acknowledging both sides of the politically fraught situation.

Apsara DiQuinzio

CURATOR OF MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART AND PHYLLIS C. WATTIS MATRIX CURATOR

Film Screenings at the PFA Theater

Wednesday / 2.4.15 / 7:00

The Anabasis of May and Fusako Shigenobu, Masao Adachi and 27 Years Without Images

Eric Baudelaire (France/Japan/Lebanon, 2011)

Introduced by Apsara DiQuinzio
Eric Baudelaire and Joseph del Pesco
in conversation

Few artists have turned from creating revolutionary art into a commitment to true revolution like Masao Adachi, a collaborator with both the Japanese New Wave and the Japanese Red Army. A scriptwriter and colleague of Nagisa Oshima and Koji Wakamatsu, and a director of left-wing sex films, Adachi abandoned commercial filmmaking—and Japan—entirely in 1974 to join the extremist Japanese Red Army in exile in Beirut, where the group gained notoriety through deadly attacks and hijackings in support of a free Palestine and a worldwide communist revolution. Also in Beirut was the group's founder, Fusako Shigenobu, and her daughter, May, who lived incognito for years. A film on exile, revolution, landscapes, and memory, *Anabasis* brings forth the remarkable parallel stories of Adachi and May, one a filmmaker who gave up images, another a young woman whose undercover existence forbade keeping images of her own life. Baudelaire places Adachi and May's revelatory voice-over reminiscences over warm, fragile Super 8mm footage of Tokyo and Beirut, grounding their wide-ranging reflections in the solid reality of place. *Anabasis* provides a richly rewarding remembrance of a fascinating, now nearly forgotten era and reminds us of the power of cinema to both portray—and influence—its landscape.

—Jason Sanders

Written and photographed by Baudelaire. Narrated by Masao Adachi and May Shigenobu (66 mins, In English and Japanese with English subtitles, Color/B&W, DCP, From LUX)

Preceded by:

The Makes

Eric Baudelaire (France, 2009)

An adaptation of Michelangelo Antonioni's notes on unmade films published in *That Bowling Alley on the Tiber*, starring French film critic Philippe Azoury in the role of "The Critic." (26 mins, In French with English subtitles, Color, DCP, From LUX)

Total running time: 92 mins

Thursday / 2.5.15 / 7:00

The Ugly One

Eric Baudelaire (France/Lebanon/Japan, 2013)

Introduced by Joseph del Pesco
Eric Baudelaire and Apsara DiQuinzio
in conversation

With the war-torn Beirut cityscape as its backdrop—urban alleys, glistening beaches, abandoned buildings—Eric Baudelaire's complex film unfolds in a time and place that vacillates among revolutionary narratives of the past, the fragile and ever-changing political situation of the present, and attempts to piece together the memories of those that live, or once lived, in the city. Conceived as a sequel to his documentary *The Anabasis of May and Fusako Shigenobu, Masao Adachi and 27 Years Without Images* (2011), Baudelaire builds the structure of the film around a story told by Adachi, who also narrates the film. The plot line pivots around two lovers and former resistance fighters, Michel (played by Lebanese artist and actor Rabih Mroué) and Lili (Juliette Navis); their narratives fragment and reconfigure around the screenplay, which itself intertwines with Adachi's own history, the act of making the film, and the self-conscious and sometimes improvisatory process of writing the script.—Apsara DiQuinzio

Written by Baudelaire, Masao Adachi, Laure Vermeersch. Photographed by Claire Mathon. With Rabih Mroué, Juliette Navis, Manal Khader. Narrated by Masao Adachi. (101 mins, In French, Arabic, Japanese, English with English subtitles, Color, DCP, From LUX)

The Secession Sessions

A project by Eric Baudelaire with Maxim Gvinjia

Kadist Art Foundation, February 7–21, 2015

Abkhazia is something of a paradox: a country that exists in the physical sense of the word (a territory with borders, a government, a flag, and a language), yet it has no legal existence because for almost twenty years it was not recognized by any other nation-state. And so Abkhazia exists without existing, caught in a liminal space, a space in between realities.

Which is why my first letter to Max was something of a message in a bottle thrown at sea.

How do you build a new state? Does the state include? Does it exclude? On what criteria can a state be considered to exist? And what forms of representation allow, or prove, this existence to be “real”? If all states are fictional collective constructs, what to make of Abkhazia: a fiction within a fiction?

Abkhazia seceded from Georgia, in the Caucasus, during a civil war in 1992–93. Like all disputed lands, Abkhazia is entangled in a conflicted narrative. To many Georgians, the breakaway state is a rogue nationalist regime, an amputated part of Georgia. To the Abkhaz, independence saved them from cultural extinction after years of Stalinist repression and Georgian domination. To many observers, Abkhazia is simply a pawn in the Great Game Russia and the West have always played in the Caucasus. *The Secession Sessions* acknowledges these competing narratives and does not seek to write an impossible objective historiography. It does not parse, verify, or document any competing claims to a land. The project starts with this observation: Abkhazia has had a territorial and human existence for twenty years, and yet it will in all likelihood remain in limbo for the foreseeable future, which makes the self-construction of its narrative something worth exploring. If Abkhazia is a laboratory case for the birth of a nation, then its Garibaldis and George Washingtons are still alive and active. Maxim Gvinjia is one of them.

When I dropped an envelope in a mailbox in Paris two years ago, I fully expected that a letter addressed to Maxim Gvinjia, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sukhum, Republic of Abkhazia, would come straight back to my studio with the notice “destination unknown.” But to my surprise, ten weeks later, I got an email from Max telling me he had received my letter, but could not reply on paper since the post office in Abkhazia cannot handle international mail. I have no idea how or why my letter arrived.

Eric Baudelaire

The Secession Sessions is conceived as a series of invitations, initiated by artist Eric Baudelaire, to investigate the question of statehood through the prism of the stateless state of Abkhazia. The exhibition is composed of various elements: regular public office hours at the Anembassy of Abkhazia for the duration of the exhibition, staffed by Maxim Gvinjia, former Foreign Minister of Abkhazia; screenings of Eric Baudelaire's film *Letters to Max*; and a program of talks, public events, and workshops with scholars and artists from various backgrounds, exploring the issues at stake in *The Secession Sessions*.

Maxim Gvinjia is the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Abkhazia. Before he was appointed on February 26, 2010, by the government of Sergueï Bagapsh, Gvinjia had served as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs since March 1, 2004. Gvinjia was born on March 13, 1976, in Sukhumi, USSR. In 1998, he graduated from the Gorlovsky State Institute for Foreign Languages in Ukraine.

Eric Baudelaire is a French visual artist and filmmaker. His films *The Ugly One* (2013) and *The Anabasis of May and Fusako Shigenobu, Masao Adachi, and 27 Years Without Images* (2011) were selected at the FIDMarseille, Locarno, Toronto, New York, and Rotterdam film festivals. His research-based practice also includes printmaking, photography, and publications which have been shown in solo exhibitions at the Fridericianum in Kassel, Bétonsalon in Paris, the Bergen Kunsthall, the Beirut Art Center, Gasworks in London, La Synagogue de Delme in France, and the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles. He has participated in the Mediacity Seoul Biennale and Yokohama Triennial in 2014, the Taipei Biennial, Berlin Documentary Forum 2, and La Triennale in Paris. His work is included in the collections of MACBA in Barcelona, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and The Whitney Museum of American Art.



Eric Baudelaire with Maxim Gvinjia: still from *Letters to Max*; HD video; color; sound; 103 mins.

Letters to Max

Eric Baudelaire with Maxim Gvinjia (Abkhazia, 2014)

Wednesdays through Fridays at 3 p.m. and 4:45 p.m. and Saturdays at 3 p.m.

Letters to Max stretches out across a series of seventy-four letters that artist Eric Baudelaire wrote and sent from his home in Paris to Max Gvinjia, the former foreign minister of Abkhazia. A stateless state situated along the eastern shores of the Black Sea in the Caucasus, Abkhazia is officially recognized by only a few other countries. Baudelaire wrote these letters thinking that they would be returned to him, stamped “destination unknown”; to his surprise, Max received them. Since Abkhazia’s post office cannot handle international mail, Max responded to the letters with a series of audio recordings, which comprise the film’s soundtrack. Shot in Abkhazia, where Baudelaire has been traveling intermittently since 2000, the film explores the fraught existence of a region caught between the polarizing, post-Soviet narratives of East and West. An intimate portrait not only of Gvinjia, but also of a contested territory, the film unfolds in slow, epistolary reflections that contrast with the rapid-fire pace of our hyper-networked lives.—Apsara DiQuinzio

Written, photographed by Baudelaire, with Max Gvinjia. (103 mins, In English and Russian with English subtitles, Color, HD video, From LUX)

The Abkhazian Anembassy

With Maxim Gvinjia, former Foreign Minister and Anambassador of the Abkhazian Republic in San Francisco

Wednesdays through Saturdays, 1–3 p.m.

Maxim Gvinjia, the Anambassador, will hold regular office hours at Kadist Art Foundation. He will make use of the space as he pleases. He may host events, greet visitors, hold discussions, and invite guests. The Anembassy is a performance (can it be called anything else?); it is not official and it has no function in an operational sense. It will operate as a ritual that is both real (after all, Max was Foreign Minister) and a fiction, but a fiction meant in a very political sense: fiction as a territory of resistance for those who are given no space in the real.

THE SAN FRANCISCO SESSIONS

A PROGRAM OF TALKS, PUBLIC EVENTS, AND WORKSHOPS WITH SCHOLARS AND ARTISTS

Saturday / 2.7.15 / 5:00

Session 1: The Anembassy Is Open

With Karen Fiss, Maxim Gvinjia, Eric Baudelaire, Apsara DiQuinzio, Joseph del Pesco

Abkhazia is something of a paradox: a country that exists, in the physical sense of the word (a territory with borders, a government, a flag and a language), yet it has no legal existence because for almost twenty years it was not recognized by any other nation state. And so Abkhazia exists without existing, caught in a liminal space, a space in between realities. Maxim Gvinjia, former Foreign Minister of the Republic of Abkhazia, and currently its Anambassador in San Francisco, will be present in his temporary office at Kadist Art Foundation for two weeks, engaging in open discussions with the citizens of a country with which Abkhazia has no formal relationship. Gvinjia's inaugural Anembassy appointment will be with Karen Fiss, and it will be open to the public. Following their conversation, Gvinjia and Fiss will be joined by Eric Baudelaire, Apsara DiQuinzio, and Joseph del Pesco for a discussion about *The Secession Sessions* and Baudelaire's 2014 film *Letters to Max*.

Karen Fiss is a professor of visual studies, fine arts, and design at the California College of the Arts. Her current research examines the history of "nation branding" in the production of visual culture, from the rise of the nation-state to its contemporary role in shaping the social, artistic, and built environments of postcolonial emerging economies. Her book project, *From Nation Building to Nation Branding*, relates global branding practices to the mechanisms of globalization in the contemporary art world and its accompanying exhibition economies.

Wednesday / 2.11.15 / 6:00

Session 2: Secession Made in USA

With members of the Cascadia independence movement and Joshua Clover

Donetsk, Kurdistan, Abkhazia, Kosovo . . . Separatism is usually portrayed as a troublesome yet distant question of foreign affairs, but the issue of secession also has a deep-rooted, homegrown, American tradition. From Aaron Burr to the Confederate states to black separatist movements, many have questioned the integrity of the American federation in speech and in deeds. For this second session, we invite representatives from the Cascadia independence movement to make their case for secession, while theorist Joshua Clover will argue for a complete reframing of the question of *Secession Made in USA* in the age of globalization.

Joshua Clover is the author of two books of poetry and two of cultural history and theory: *The Matrix* (British Film Institute, 2005) and *1989: Bob Dylan Didn't Have This to Sing About* (University of California, 2009). His new book of poetry, *Red Epic*, is forthcoming from Commune Editions (spring 2015) and a book on the political economy of struggle, *Of Riot*, will be published by Verso in spring 2016. His column "Pop & Circumstance" appears monthly in *The Nation*. He has won yearlong fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Fine Arts Work Center, and the Cornell Society for the Humanities. He is a professor of English at the University of California, Davis.

Cascadia is a slowly emerging independence movement. It has been listed at number seven on *Time* magazine's top ten most likely to succeed (at seceding) independence movements, along with Tibet, Scotland, and Catalonia, as well as listed as *Vice*'s personal favorite independence movement. With a combined population of fifteen million and one of the largest economies in the world, the Pacific Northwest of the United States and Canada is poised to emerge as a megaregion and global economic powerhouse driven by innovation, energy, geographic location, and sustainable resource management, attracting new jobs and investment while enhancing an already unparalleled quality of life.

Saturday / 2.14.15 / 5:00

Session 3: Performance As Politics and Vice Versa

With Julia Bryan-Wilson, David Buuck, Aaron Gach

This session explores the convergence between political activism and performance art. Julia Bryan-Wilson will weave a brief history of artists adopting / highjacking / transforming the structures, symbols, or rituals of political systems; re-creating political systems within their practices; or building social projects as performance art. Aaron Gach will talk about his work and the Center for Tactical Magic, a fusion force summoned from the ways of the artist, the magician, the ninja, and the private investigator. And David Buuck will lecture / perform on how artists and activists have attempted to puncture holes in the state apparatus, in moments of refusal or withdrawal.

Julia Bryan-Wilson is an associate professor of modern and contemporary art at UC Berkeley, with a focus on art since 1960 in the US, Europe, and Latin America. She is the author of *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era*, published by the University of California Press in 2009, and editor of *OCTOBER Files: Robert Morris*, from the MIT Press. Her current book project is entitled *Crisis Craft: Handmade Art and Activism since 1970*. A scholar and a critic, Bryan-Wilson has written articles that have appeared in *Art Journal*, *Artforum*, *Frieze*, *October*, and *Oxford Art Journal*.

Aaron Gach is a convergent media artist whose work consistently addresses public space, social politics, and community dynamics, as well as an adjunct professor at the California College of the Arts. Inspired by studies with a private investigator, a magician, and a ninja, he established the Center for Tactical Magic in 2000. This collaborative authoring framework is dedicated to the coalescence of art, magic, and creative tactics for encouraging positive social change.

David Buuck is a poet and visiting assistant professor at Mills College, Oakland. He is the founder of BARGE (Bay Area Research Group in Enviro-aesthetics), and cofounder and editor of *Tripwire*, a journal of poetics and art. His poetry, prose, essays, and artwork have been published and shown in a variety of contexts, from print to galleries to performance events. *An Army of Lovers*, cowritten with Juliana Spahr, is available at City Lights.

Wednesday / 2.18.15 / 6:00

Session 4: Georgian Voices

With Harsha Ram and guests

In his forty-eighth letter to Max, Eric wrote: “Perhaps it’s unfair of me to decide to make a film with a single voice, yours, and then ask you to represent another perspective, to speak for a hypothetical Georgian whose voice is absent from this film. Perhaps I should let the camera speak instead of you. Search the landscape for images that will speak of absence. Can we let images replace what is unsaid in the story of Abkhazia? Will this be enough?” In this session, Harsha Ram invites members from the Georgian community in the Bay Area to reflect on this question and discuss the issue of voice and representation in the conflicting narratives of the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict.

Harsha Ram is an associate professor of Slavic languages and literatures and comparative literature at UC Berkeley. He specializes in the cultural and political history of Russia, the Caucasus, and Eurasia, as well as modern Indian literature and Italian literature. His most recent book is *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire* (2003); his forthcoming book is entitled *City of Crossroads: Tiflis Modernism and the Russian-Georgian Encounter*.

Saturday / 2.21.15 / 5:00

Session 5: Present Future of Emancipation

With Martin Jay and Tarek Elhaik

In this session, Martin Jay and Tarek Elhaik tackle the fundamental issues at play throughout *The Secession Sessions* and take them to their most critical horizon: the question of emancipation.

How can we be free, living in the community of our choice, according to rules we fashion, in dignity and equality? Nationalism was the nineteenth-century answer to this question of emancipation, and the paradigm persisted within the postcolonial movements of the twentieth century. The result is a world of states, where every piece of the map has been divided up and flagged. Guided by the same answer, we see conflicts still raging in many parts of the world (Abkhazia is one of them). We see also the poverty of this way of thinking and acting in a world that is increasingly globalized (a dead-end on the road to nowhere?) and we witness the impossible coexistence of nationalist aspirations on a map where ethnic and cultural boundaries do not match the demarcations of existing states, and never will. What is the present future of emancipation in the twenty-first century? What alternatives are there to nationalism and the state? Does nonterritorial emancipation have any meaning in a world of states? Must emancipation always be grounded in territory to have lasting power? Can individual emancipation provide real answers that are meaningful at the community level? Can we imagine new forms of emancipation?

Martin Jay is the Sidney Hellman Ehrman Professor of History at UC Berkeley. He is a renowned intellectual historian and his research interests have been groundbreaking in connecting history with other academic and intellectual activities, such as the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, other figures and methods in continental social theory, cultural criticism, and historiography. His most recent books are *Essays from the Edge: Parerga and Paralipomena* (2011) and *The Virtues of Mendacity: On Lying in Politics* (2010). He is a recipient of the 2010/2011 Berlin Prize Fellowship from the American Academy in Berlin, and has received awards and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, among many others.

Tarek Elhaik is a media anthropologist, film curator, and assistant professor of media and culture at San Francisco State University. He works on transnational avant-gardes, media arts, and curatorial platforms in Latin America, the Arab World, and the Mediterranean. His writings have appeared in books and journals including *Framework*, *Revista de Antropologia Social*, and *Critical Arts*. He is currently part of a collaborative team of researchers, hosted by the Los Angeles Film Forum and funded by the Getty Foundation, that will curate and edit an anthology on experimental cinema and media in Latin America. He is the author of *The Incurable-Image: Curating Post-Mexican Film & Media Arts* (Edinburgh University Press, forthcoming).



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SPECIAL THANKS TO MÉLANIE BOUTELOUP AT BÉTONSALON; PABLO DE OCAMPO AT WESTERN FRONT; KATE FOWLE AND VIKA DUSHKINA AT THE GARAGE CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ART, MOSCOW; TOM DE WAAL; STEINAR SEKKINGSTAD AND MARTIN CLARK FROM BERGEN KUNSTHALL; JYTTE JENSEN, SALLY BERGER, AND IZZY LEE, THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK; LAURE VERMEERSCH; JULIETTE NAVIS; MARINE ERIC; GUILLAUME DÉSANGES.

ABOVE AND FRONT

Eric Baudelaire with Maxim Gvinjia:
still from *Letters to Max*; HD video;
color, sound; 103 mins.

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