

# GLADSTONE GALLERY

Cyprien Gaillard

*Nightlife*

530 West 21st Street

February 23 – April 14, 2018

Opening February 22, 6-8pm

Gladstone Gallery is pleased to present Cyprien Gaillard's second exhibition with the gallery in New York and the United States premiere of his film, *Nightlife*. Shot entirely at night over the course of two years, this three-dimensional film connects a series of divergent natural and cultural phenomena throughout Cleveland, Los Angeles and Berlin. Organized into distinct chapters, *Nightlife* optically, audibly and conceptually brings together an obscure yet significant mix of historical monuments and occurrences, forming a hyper psychedelic experience. This ambitious production ties together several key themes that recur throughout the artist's oeuvre, such as cultural relics, preservation and entropy, and speaks to the multidisciplinary nature of his practice.

*Nightlife* chronicles four interconnected subjects: Auguste Rodin's *The Thinker* installed at the Cleveland Museum of Art; non-indigenous plants scattered throughout the Los Angeles basin; the annual Pyronale firework event at the Olympiastadion in Berlin; and the Jesse Owens Olympic oak tree at the James Ford Rhodes High School in Cleveland. The film begins with the camera panning over an unidentifiable undulating green form that resembles an indiscernible tropical leaf. As the camera continues rightward, showing the viewer a scaly, dense metal object, Rodin's *The Thinker* is unveiled in its full form. One of the last casts overseen directly by Rodin, this work is shown in its current state outside the Cleveland Museum of Art. In 1970, the work was partially destroyed by a bombing attributed to a cell of the anti-imperialist group 'Weather Underground.' Through the lens of stereoscopic vision, Rodin's damaged thinker permeates the exhibition space, establishing both the spectral and sculptural nature of this film.

The viewer is then transported to Los Angeles, where different species of street vegetation appear to dance throughout the city. Yearning and swaying against artificial barriers and anonymous buildings adorned with pulsating bursts of technicolored lights, Gaillard records and highlights the various flora's humanistic qualities. Each plant seems to respond to the light and music in a choreographed and humanistic way, creating a trance-like spectacle of movement. Primarily focusing on the Hollywood Juniper, an East Asian species of trees that Gaillard has returned to throughout his practice, these plants directly engage and struggle with the imposing architectural forms they are situated alongside, providing a deeper narrative about cross-cultural cohabitation.

In the third act of *Nightlife*, the setting shifts to the Olympiastadion, the site of the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin for the annual Pyronale fireworks event, a two-day international pyrotechnical competition. Built from 1934 – 36 during the Nazi regime, this Stadium was once a monument to the Third Reich and a symbol of Germany's connections to World War II, but is now used for a multitude of contemporary events. The viewer enters the scene at ground level, but is stealthily levitated into a field of fireworks, entering an abstracted landscape of lights and motion. Gaillard captures the action of this event in one long take from a unique aerial perspective, moving through blasts of light and plumes of smoke, forms that resemble ghostly depictions of trees or gun smoke from a violent battlefield. The event looks like a cosmic blast, blurring the line between reality and a hallucinogenic trip. The film concludes in Cleveland at the site of Jesse Owens' Olympic oak planted at the Ford Rhodes High School. Owens, who won four gold medals at the 1936 Olympic Games, was awarded four oak saplings by Hitler, one of which still lives on today outside the stadium where he trained. The sapling turned full-grown tree is illuminated from multiple perspectives by a circling helicopter, creating a cascade of shadows that dance throughout the tree's sturdy branches.

Mirroring the three-dimensionality of the film's visual narrative is the dub soundtrack to *Nightlife*, a space-filling and deliberately low-tech soundscape made by the artist using a variety of analog filters and basic sound effects, such as reverb and delay, creating a disorienting illusion of expanded space. The soundtrack features a sample from the chorus of rocksteady singer's Alton Ellis' song, *Blackman's Word*, played on a loop throughout the film's first three acts. Originally released in 1969 on the Treasure Isle label, the lyrics sang, "I was born a loser." The song was later re-recorded on a rival label, Coxsone, in 1971, and the song's title was changed and the chorus sang, "I was born a winner," a subtle yet powerful audible transformation that is reflected in the film as Gaillard turns his attention to Jesse Owens' Olympic oak.

Cyprien Gaillard was born in Paris and lives and works in Berlin and New York. He has been the subject of solo exhibitions at a number of major international institutions, including: Julia Stoschek Collection in collaboration with K20 – Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; MoMA PS1, New York; Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, Milan; Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Kunst-Werke Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Zollamt, Frankfurt am Main; and Kunsthalle Basel.

Robert Mapplethorpe  
515 West 24th Street  
Through April 14, 2018

Robert Bechtle  
130 East 64th Street  
March 10 – April 28, 2018

Roe Ethridge  
12 Rue du Grand Cerf  
April 17 – June 16, 2018

For further information, please contact Andrew Huff: [ahuff@gladstonegallery.com](mailto:ahuff@gladstonegallery.com)  
New York gallery hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 10am–6pm  
Brussels gallery hours: Tuesday–Friday, 10am–6pm and Saturday, 12pm–6pm