

## ANTOINE GRUMBACH

1942



1) Untitled - Encyclopédie Vagabonde, 2019, watercolor and India ink on paper, 31 x 23 cm  
 2) Trouville l'été, 2019, watercolor and India ink on paper, 23 x 31 cm  
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Antoine Grumbach (1942) is an artist-architect and urban designer who graduated from the Ecole des Beaux-arts in Paris in 1967 and received the Grand Prix National d'Urbanisme et d'Art Urbain in 1992. His international achievements are countless, as are his major architectural and urban planning projects, which include the Cours Mirabeau in Aix-en-Provence, the new inhabited bridge over the Thames in London, as well as the restructuring of Shanghai's historic district, Greater Moscow, the Paris tramway and the Greater Paris "Seine Métropole" project... For over 40 years, he taught at the Ecoles nationales d'architecture de Paris-La Villette et Belleville, the Ecoles des ponts et chaussées and the universities of Columbia, Harvard, Princeton and Toronto, where he lectured on urban semiology. In addition to his international experience as an urban artist-architect, Antoine Grumbach became close to the great structuralist intellectuals from '67 to '69 at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Études, and attended Roland Barthes' semiotics courses on the linguistics of discourse. Along with students from the ENSBA, including Christian de Portzamparc, he took part in Michel Foucault's lectures at the Collège de France, and attended Umberto Eco's semiotics seminars in Milan. In this way, he explored the relationship between form and meaning, sign and perception. The relationship between city and text lies at the heart of his writings and works (*La Ville est un livre* in the MNAM-CCI collections). Antoine Grumbach is quickly recognized as one of France's pioneers in the study and consideration of public space. Influenced as much by Structuralism as by Situationism, Grumbach's work is based on respect for significant traces of tabula rasa, the re-semantization of existing spaces: «the dream has its point of departure in reality and is realized in it».

Well-known as an urban fixer, Antoine Grumbach sees the city as continuous, infinitely complex and perpetually unfinished, envisioning its development and renewal without necessarily anticipating its demolition or replacement. He sees modernity not as a rupture or restoration, but rather as a skillful interweaving of past and present.

Similar to Land Artists as Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer, Robert Morris or Dennis Oppenheim, Antoine Grumbach conceived a work of Aerial Art, entitled *Les Yeux du Ciel* [*The Eyes of the Sky*], a gaze at Earth that can be visited both from the inside as well as the outside since it is offered up to the sky, in the manner of the Nazca Lines, a group of geoglyphs in the desert of Peru. Starting from Antoine Grumbach's principle *I see the eye of the one who sees my eye*, this architect-artist contributes to the Millenary history of the great terrestrial tracings visible from space.



*Les yeux du ciel*, 2023, marble et azulejos, 9 x 49 x 38 cm,  
 edition of 8 © Nicola Gnesi, Courtesy Jeanne Bucher Jaeger,  
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*Les Yeux du Ciel* are located at Villeneuve-sous-Dammartin, on the axis of the runways of the Roissy-Charles de Gaulle airport, on a plateau measuring 1.6 kilometers long, 800 meters wide and 30 meters high. It is one of the largest sites for the reuse of excavated soil in the construction industry developed by the company ECT. Driven by the belief that inert and excavated Earth from construction sites throughout his life as an architect is not waste, but a noble and fertile material that can be recycled, Grumbach approached the company ECT, which manages this soil, with a proposal for a work of *Aerial Art* that reconciles circular industry, landscape and monumental art.



Antoine Grumbach, *L'Œil du ciel*, realized by ECT at Villeneuve-sous-Dammartin, France © ECT mai 2023, Courtesy Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris-Lisbon

The first eye, *Icare, oeil Ouest*, was unveiled in autumn 2023, in conjunction with the *Les Yeux du Ciel* exhibition that the Jeanne Bucher Jaeger gallery devoted to it from September 2023 to January 2024. This exhibition was presented, in a different configuration, at the Espace Musées de Paris Aéroport at Paris-Charles de Gaulle, in partnership with the Paris Aéroport group and the Jeanne Bucher Jaeger gallery from January 29 to May 31, 2024.

Antoine Grumbach's work as an architect and artist has always developed intimately through drawing, pencil in hand, guided by the foundations of memory, imagination, poetry and the association of words and shapes, as in the 108 drawings in his *Encyclopédie Vagabonde.. (...) I've always been fascinated by the encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert: the countless plates and technical drawings, accompanied by erudite texts, make up a kind of collective memory that fascinates me. (...) This aspect of incompleteness captivates me, because today all knowledge is incomplete and fragile (...) Faced with the avalanche of images evoked by these reflections, I tried to take them by the hand, the hand that writes and draws, to conceive of images, which are without subject, which do not make a statement, which are open to all possible interpretations, in a sense letting my spirit wander. (...) Ruins, the 'primitive hut,' imaginary constructions and piles of earth often find their way into my drawings (...)*, says the artist.

*Les Yeux du Ciel* exhibition at the gallery was the second part of a cycle of three exhibitions presented in 2023 and 2024, entitled *ENCHAN-TEMPS*. They testify to the gallery's commitment to artists linked to a certain "artistic Renaissance", revealing universalist, societal, environmental and pacifist values in their work. This cycle of exhibitions opened in February 2023 with Dani Karavan and Jean-Paul Philippe's *Habiter la Terre - Archéologie Intérieure*, continued with Antoine Grumbach's *Les Yeux du Ciel* and closes with Susumu Shingu's *Le Souffle d'Ici - L'Eau de là*, until July 13, 2024.



*Les Yeux du Ciel*, Antoine Grumbach, 2023, Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Marais, Paris © ecliptique laurent thion, Courtesy Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris-Lisbon



*Les Yeux du Ciel*, Antoine Grumbach, 2024, Espace Musées at Paris-CDG, Aéroport de Paris © Gwen Le Bras, Courtesy Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris-Lisbon