

MAISONNEUVE

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Olive MARTIN

Américains d'Amérique

May 17 – June 14, 2008

Opening Saturday 17th May, 6 – 9 pm

"This is how I've entered California. The name is almost as magical as New York. It's the land of streets paved with gold, of pioneers and cowboys. Through history and movies it's become a legendary country that, like all legends, belongs to my past.

I'm burning with impatience. This time I'm not arriving as a tourist in a land where nothing is meant for me; I'm coming to see a woman friend who happens to be living in a land everyone says is marvelous. It's perhaps even stranger to feel expected in an unknown place than to prepare yourself to disembark without help. I don't know what awaits me, but someone knows. The sea, orange juice, mountains, flowers, whiskeys — I'm not going to encounter them and try to possess them; they will be given to me. Someone is waiting for the right moment to present them to me as a gift. They already are a gift; and in my heart I feel the anxiety and greed of childhood Christmas Eves."

Simone de Beauvoir in *America Day by Day*, 1947

Translation by Carol Cosman, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1999

In *Américains d'Amérique*, Olive Martin presents thirty-one black and white photographs taken between 2004 and 2006, during three trips to California to stay with her friend and collaborator, the Los Angeles writer, April Durham.

"These black-and-white photographs, which are of a documentary nature, were taken in the social and geographical landscape of California. They are portraits as much as landscapes, street scenes, or still lives, the result of long reminiscence and the influence photography, cinema, and American literature have had upon me. They represent a glance, full of expectation, criticism, and idealization, at this society and culture, one that reality puts to the test via travel."—

Olive Martin, April 2008

Under the same title, *Américains d'Amérique* [appropriated from the French translation of *The Making of Americans* by Gertrude Stein], is an art book (26 x 820 cm, ed. of 20) containing twenty nine images from the series and six texts by April Durham. The book follows a previous collaborative work by the two artists: *Common Objects*, published in French translation by Joca Seria in Nantes in 2005 and in the original by Beyond Baroque Books in Los Angeles in 2006.

Olive Martin was born in Belgium in 1972. She lives and works in Nantes, France.

Olive Martin has partnered on many projects with Patrick Bernier; *Manmuswak*, 16 min. 35mm film (2005), was highlighted in an exhibition at galerie Maisonneuve in 2005. This film has been shown in many festivals and venues including, the 58th International Film Festival of Locarno, the International Film Festival in Rotterdam in 2006, screenings, the Jeu de Paume in October 2007, cinemas and TV. It has received several awards including the Grand Prix du Jury at the Premiers Plans Festival in Angers in 2006, "best fiction film" at Douarnenez Festival in 2006. She collaborated in 2007 with Patrick Bernier on *Projet pour une jurisprudence* during a fellowship at Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers, whose *X. Contre préfet de..., Plaidoirie pour une jurisprudence*, the "happening" version of the project (in collaboration with jurists Sylvia Preuss-Laussinotte and Sébastien Canevet) has been performed several times in Paris. It will be performed on May 10, 2008 in Extra-City at Antwerp, Belgium.

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