

# Stéphane Couturier

## Alger, Climat de France

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October **15**th 2016 ...

January **15**th 2017

Opening /

Friday October **14**th / 7 pm

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musée  
Nicéphore  
Niépce



This exhibition is made possible with the mecenat of Marie and David Benmussa and with the support of Canson, the Ministry of culture / DRAC Bourgogne Franche-Comté and the Friends of the Nicéphore Niépce museum.

#### **Guided tour**

with Stéphane Couturier  
Saturday october 15th  
/ 3.30 pm  
followed by a book signing.

**Stéphane Couturier examines urban developments and building metamorphoses. The photographer elegantly manages to reveal the “underbelly of the city”; his shots, whether taken in Paris, Berlin, Havana or Seoul, are the inextricable interlacing of a hyperrealist depiction and the dissolution of form. The “Climat de France” project, started in 2011, is based around Fernand Pouillon, a figure of 1950’s architecture who was one of the great builders of the post-World War Two reconstruction boom. Through photography and video, Stéphane Couturier dissects Alger’s biggest district, which was built during the war in Algeria, a place of conflict between the GIA and the authorities, and now the centre of all types of trafficking.**

The city is a collection of sequences, of course, but it remains a block. Building by building, neighbourhood by neighbourhood, portrait by portrait, Alger seems indivisible. The fragments correspond perfectly to the idea of the city. We know, we’ve said it often enough, the idea and the object cannot coincide. Nevertheless, here, Stéphane Couturier comes close to the “truth”. He does not convoke our senses but he makes us see the matter. By systematically depicting images in series, he detaches himself from a solely ‘matérialist’ depiction. His photography aims to give an account of this event through the infinite number of circumstances that accompany it. The photographer provides us with glimpses of the living, but does so not by convoking chance. The idea of the fragmented band joins them, or, connects them to a form of thought that gives them meaning. The precise representation of the properties of that which is exposed incites the viewer to comment. The photographic method is implacable.

Is truth, then, not to be found in the precision of these lines? The knowledge of things is nevertheless inseparable from these suspended objects, running along interminable facades. That which is fleeting, people’s everyday stories, make light of the monument and its essence. Time is the main issue in this photography; each image comes with its own layers of history. Long term time is depicted beside ever-changing current events. Sheets and clothes dry and satellite dishes signal modernity. Out of time and in the moment, photography proves that nothing comes before anything else.

[...]

We see how Stéphane Couturier constitutes his photographic universe. As a viewer, believing we are contemplating extensive documentation on architecture or simply compiling an insensitive inventory, we contemplate our own relationship with order and disorder. All of these images, with their subtly repetitive construction,

**Publications**

*Stéphane Couturier*  
*Alger – Climat de France*  
 Texts / François Cheval,  
 Étienne Hatt  
 Editor: Arnaud Bizalion,  
 Marseille, 2014  
 23 x 32 cm  
 76 pages  
 ISBN: 978-2-36980-023-1  
 30 €

*Stéphane Couturier*  
 Texts / François Cheval,  
 Matthieu Poirier  
 Editor: Xavier Barral,  
 Paris, 2016  
 24 x 30 cm  
 308 pages  
 ISBN: 978-2-36511-111-9  
 39 €

echo our anxieties and our desires. Photography, in olden times, liked to define good and evil. Here, the approach is more like describing the imperative of things and its antidote, the fluid. In these photographs, we never come up against the solid. Life is avoidance and withdrawal.

**François Cheval**

**Climat de France, “an architecture without disdain”**

Fernand Pouillon was an architect of Mediterranean sensibilities known for his designs of high-quality, low-cost housing developments with a great many units. The mayor of Algiers commissioned him in the nineteen-fifties to design three such projects, including the Climat de France complex. These developments were built for the purpose of relocating the Muslim population that was living in cramp conditions in shantytowns, thereby contributing to reducing social tensions and reasserting the authority of Metropolitan France.

Overlooking the working class district of Bab el-Oued and the old city, and facing the sea, Climat de France was the biggest of these developments, offering nearly 5,000 housing units. [...] The main building is structured around a rectangular plaza, 233 x 38 meters long. White stone columns line the interior building fronts, giving them a classical look. Pouillon wrote: “I’m sure that this architecture is without disdain. Maybe for the first time in the modern era we have settled people in a monument. And these people who were the poorest of poor Algeria understood this. They were the ones who named it « the 200 Columns ».”

Today, Climat de France is an overpopulated housing development, some of which is dilapidated and unfit for habitation. The cellars have been converted into rooms and the rooftop of the 200 Columns building – initially designed specifically with the housework and social life of the women in mind – has been turned into a shantytown. The plaza has been dubbed La Colombie [Columbia] for all the trafficking and dealing that goes on there and the police don’t enter the project anymore. But the stone architecture has nonetheless withstood these overpopulated conditions much better than concrete would have done

**Étienne Hatt**

Journalist, on the editorial  
 staff of *artpress*



**1 / Stéphane Couturier**  
 Alger – Cité “Climat de France”  
 2011-2012  
 Façade #1  
 C-Print  
 180 x 298 cm  
 © Stéphane Couturier



**2 / Stéphane Couturier**  
 Alger – Cité “Climat de France”  
 2011-2013  
 Façade #2  
 C-Print  
 160 x 160 cm  
 © Stéphane Couturier

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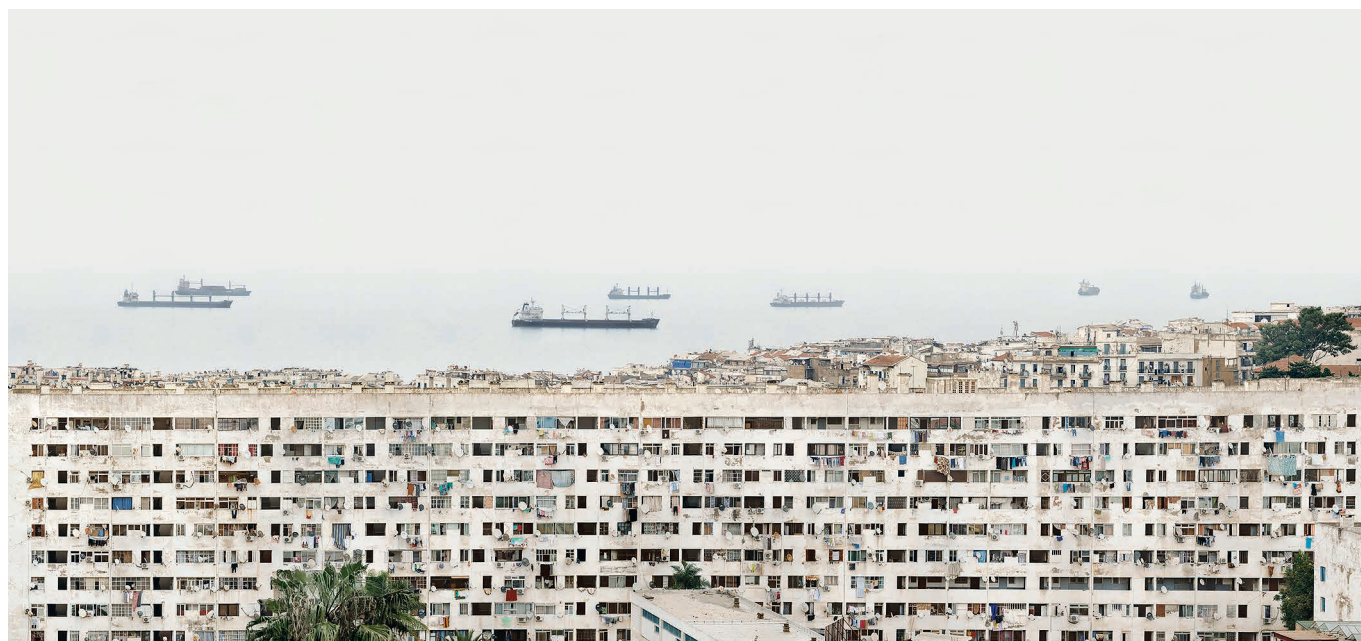
2

**3 / Stéphane Couturier**  
Alger – Cité “Climat de France”  
2011-2013  
Façade #4  
C-Print  
160 x 187 cm  
© Stéphane Couturier



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**4 / Stéphane Couturier**  
Alger – Bab-EI-Oued n° 2  
2013  
C-Print  
140 x 300 cm  
© Stéphane Couturier



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**5 / Stéphane Couturier**  
 Alger – Kasbah – Photo n° 2  
 2015  
 C-Print  
 140 x 170 cm  
 © Stéphane Couturier



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**6 / Stéphane Couturier**  
 Femme d'Alger (detail)  
 2016  
 Inkjet print  
 60 x 40 cm  
 © Stéphane Couturier



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**Open**

every day  
 except Tuesdays and holidays,  
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 and 2.00 ... 5.45 pm

**Free entrance**

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**Access**

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 or 26 Chalon Sud  
 SNCF train station in Chalon  
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 Le Creusot-Montchanin  
 [20 min. from Chalon by car]  
 Lyon-Saint-Exupéry Airport  
 [an hour from Chalon by car]