

Baptist Coelho

Mapping(Thoughts) France - Seine Saint Denis

**Une pièce de monnaie de Monsieur
Risso, 2012-13**

Audio/video running time: 15 minutes
50 seconds loop

Note

The video, **Une pièce de monnaie de Monsieur Risso**, takes its starting point from an interview by the artist with Mr. Pierre Risso at his apartment in St. Denis; a northern suburb of Paris. Mr. Risso, who was born in 1928, recounted his heroic life as part of the Northern Liberation Movement in France during World War II. This meeting with Mr. Risso was initiated as part of the artist's research involving the history of munitions factories in St. Denis.

During the conversation, Mr. Risso gave the artist a two franc aluminum coin, which was minted in 1947. Mr. Risso recalled that aluminum coins were substituted for the original copper ones when they were melted down to make munitions for the War. The coin's origin was later questioned when the artist consulted a local historian and another story was revealed. This inspired the artist to explore the difference between perceptual experiences that happen in the present and the interplay of remembering and imagination that takes place after time has lapsed.

The video became a mechanism for the artist to explore how history is interpreted and shared; while at the same time questioning the validity of stories that emerge from personal interactions and informed attestations by the state. The video begins with a dialogue between Coelho and Mr. Risso, which develops into an animated story. As the narrative unfolds, the coin embarks on a journey to discover its identity; coming in contact with people from various places such as a Flea Market, Church, Public Garden, History Museum and Public Library; located within the département of Seine-Saint-Denis. The story does not arrive at a final conclusion; but rather more questions emerge when the coin finds itself in a Public Library and is confronted with various interpretations of its origin.

While developing this video, the artist reflected on his own journey of discovery about the correlation between myth and reality. By creating this coin's personal story, the artist explores the complexity of history and whether myth is at the heart of our understanding, which in turn can influence our sense of present reality.

Une pièce de monnaie de Monsieur Risso was developed while Coelho was Artist-in-Residence at the Centre International d'Accueil et d'Echanges des Récollets in Paris, France, 2012. The video was produced by Buchet Ponsoye Foundation, Paris; Espace Synesthésie, St Denis and TRIAD, London.



DVD still



DVD stills

➡ Audio/video: <https://vimeo.com/84537717>

14th July 2012, 2012-13

Installation with iron drum,
liquid fuel and audio/video

Installation dimensions: variable

Audio/video running time:
9 minutes 53 seconds loop

Note

The **14th of July 2012** is an installation which consists of a steel drum, with a video projected onto its suspended lid and the smell of liquid fuel.

The work takes its inspiration from Bastille Day* which the artist observed on the 14th of July, 2012, along the Avenue of Champs-Élysée in Paris; one of the oldest and largest military parades in Europe. Amidst tight security and vigilance, spectators cheered the passing cavalcades which displayed the country's manufactured munitions and various marching military regiments.

The empty steel drum was acquired in Paris and represents the volatility of human life and the depletion of resources that a society experiences in order to perpetuate conflict. The video displays fragmented images of a military parade with accompanying sounds of the marching bands. The captured footage progressively slows and blurs to finally terminate into a white void. While we observe the details of the weaponry, the audio also gradually slows down and the distorted sounds become reminiscent of bombing. The blurred images reveal an ambiguity and complexity in the relationship between civilians and the military..

The smell of liquid fuel, experienced as part of the installation, replicates the strong fumes expelled by the tanks and large military vehicles which were part of the parade along the Avenue. The unsettling odor is reminiscent of the smell from machinery on an actual battlefield. Sensorial experiences of the installation are intentionally disruptive and leave the viewer confused and curious. This work brings to question the significance and importance of hosting military parades, as part of a national event in France, or creating other such similar presentations around the world.

14th of July 2012 was developed while Coelho was Artist-in-Residence at the Centre International d'Accueil et d'Échanges des Récollets in Paris, France, 2012.

*Bastille Day is the English name given to the French National Day, which is celebrated on 14th of July each year. In France it is formally called "La Fête Nationale"; when translated means "The National Celebration". This event commemorates the 1789 storming of the Bastille prison fortress and is seen as a symbol for the uprising of a modern nation.

- Davide Allison



Installation views

Recording: <http://vimeo.com/album/2307605/video/69123225>



Installation detail



DVD stills

➔ Audio/video extract: <https://vimeo.com/69125275>

Avenue des Champs-Élysées, 2012-13

Digital print on archival paper

Print dimension: L 29.7 X B 42
centimeters

Archival Paper: Hahemühle Photo Rag,
188 gsm, acid-free

Printer: Epson Stylus Pro 11880

Note

Avenue des Champs-Élysées is a photograph taken on Bastille Day; a national event presided over by the President of France and foreign dignitaries. While previously held elsewhere within Paris, it was first hosted along the Champs-Élysées* on the 14th of July, 1915 and has continued as an annual event.

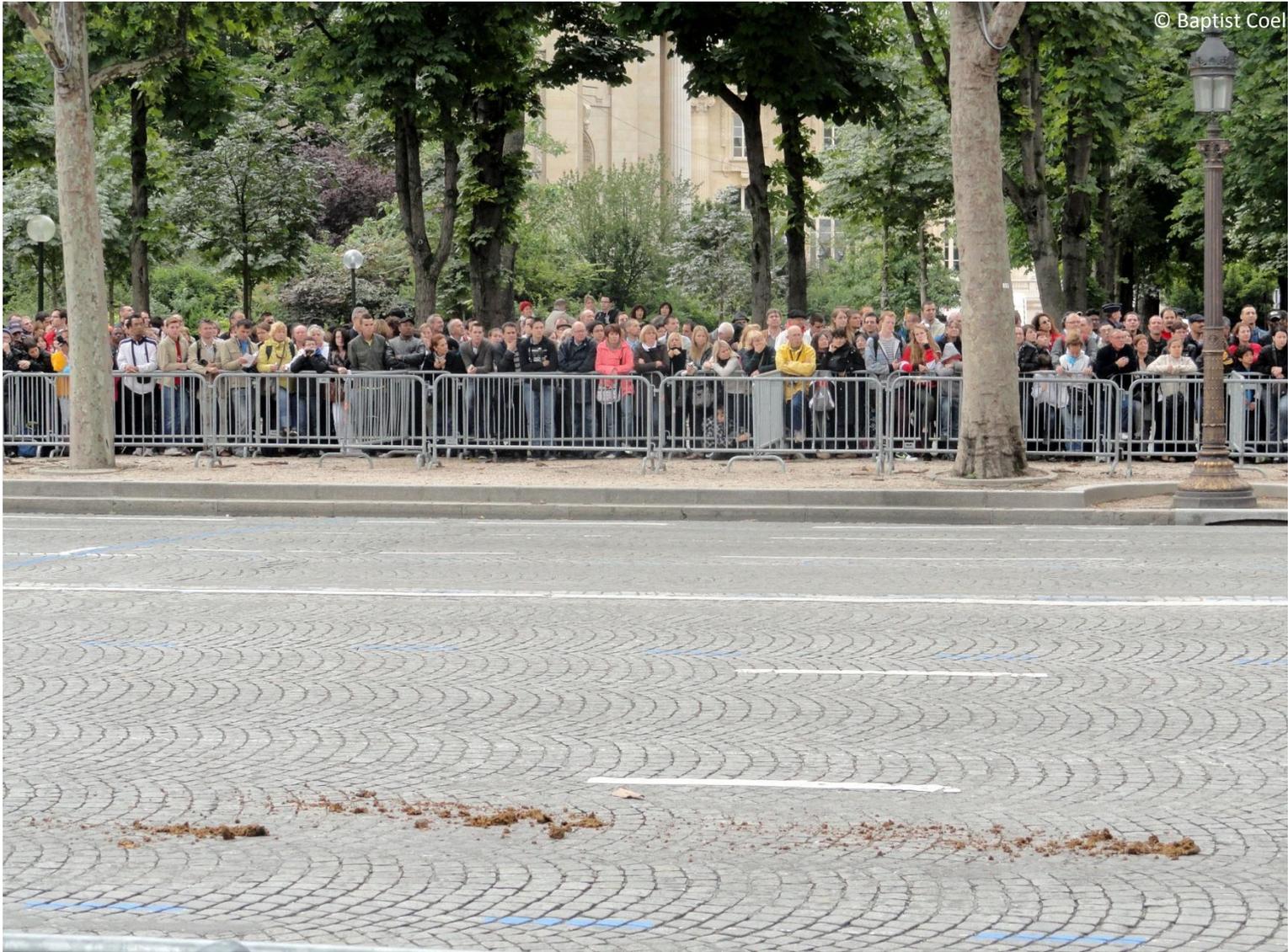
Amidst tight security and vigilance, spectators gather behind a metal barricade to observe and cheer the spectacle which displays the country's munitions and military force. The sensate experience of the parade brings to question the contemporary meaning and intention of hosting a military parade as part of a national event in France, or other such similar demonstrations around the world. This event is in stark contrast to the original focus of Bastille Day which was celebrated as a feast, before France became militarized in 1880.

Paradoxically, military parades are designed to create a sense of national pride and civil protection but on the other hand one can feel intimidated by the force of these armaments which evoke an aggressive and foreboding atmosphere. The photograph reflects the transitory nature of the parade; leaving many spectators to further question what may or may not have existed.

Avenue des Champs-Élysées was developed while Coelho was Artist-in-Residence at the Centre International d'Accueil et d'Echanges des Récollets in Paris, France, 2012.

*In the 17th century, the avenue was originally fields and market gardens and has gone through several transformations; including the name which was changed to Champs-Élysées in 1709. During the 18th century it became a fashionable venue and even today it is one of the principal tourist destinations; lined with luxury shops and cafés. The avenue runs for 1.91 kilometers, in the northwest district of Paris and ends at the Arc de Triomphe.

- Davide Allison



© Baptist Coel

Digital print