

## **COSMOS 1939: Georges Salles/Walter Benjamin**

by Jean-Michel Alberola

with guest appearances by Aura Rosenberg, Frances Scholz and Chantal Benjamin

03.09.2021 – 29.01.2022 Tieranatomisches Theater of the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

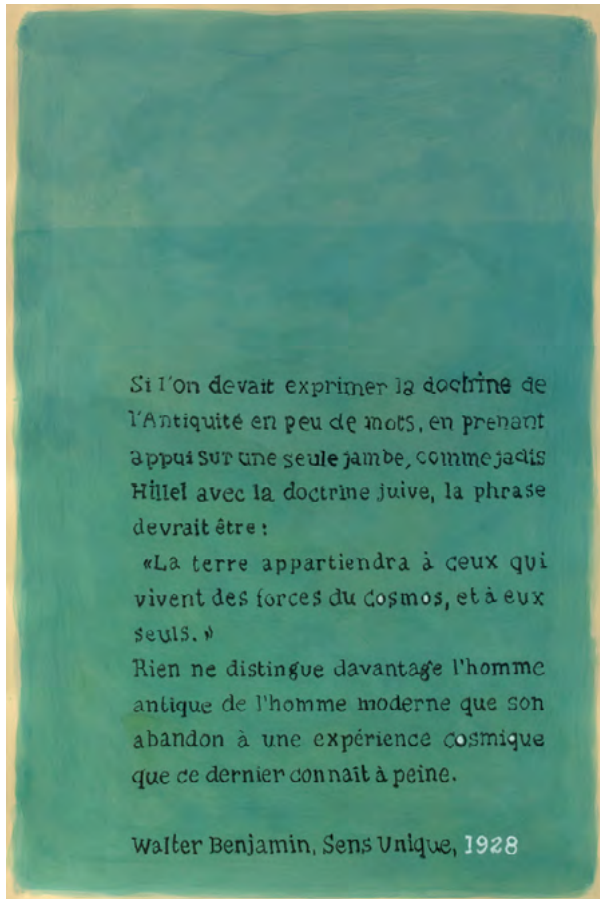


*"The earth will belong to those alone, who live from the forces of the cosmos."*

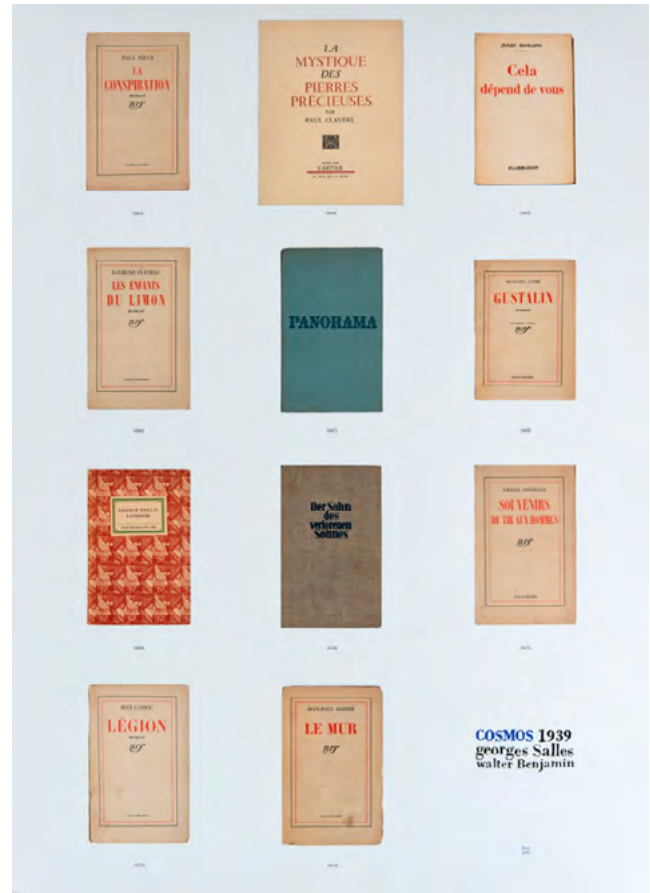
Hillel Zeitlin, quoted from Walter Benjamin's *One-Way Street*, 1928

The Tieranatomisches Theater is showing the exhibition *COSMOS 1939: Georges Salles / Walter Benjamin* by the French artist Jean-Michel Alberola from September 3, 2021 to January 29, 2022. From October 2018 to July 2019 it was on display at the Center Dominique-Vivant Denon in the Louvre Museum, and is now coming to Berlin, expanded to include a guest appearance by the artists Aura Rosenberg, Frances Scholz and Chantal Benjamin. *COSMOS 1939* combines new graphic works by Alberola with historical maps, books and photographs, based on an intellectual encounter in 1939 between the thinkers Georges Salles and Walter Benjamin in Paris.

Georges Salles (1889–1966), then curator of the newly founded East Asian Department of the Louvre Museum, published the text *Le Regard* (eng. *The Glance*) in 1939. "What connects all people on this planet," writes Salles, "is the trained eye, which reshapes the world with every glance according to the scheme of its own cosmos." Salles describes the act of viewing art as an organic experience, an almost culinary delight, not only found in quiet halls of museums, but also strolling through the streets of the metropolis.



Jean-Michel Alberola, 'Sens Unique', 1928, 2018,  
Drawing on paper.  
© Jean-Michel Alberola / Adagg, Paris, 2020  
© Photography Jean-Louis Josse for Le Passage



© Jean-Michel Alberola / Adagg, Paris, 2020  
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The literary critic and philosopher Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) had been living in exile in Paris since 1933 and was deeply impressed by *Le Regard*. In a review and a letter to Max Horkheimer, Benjamin explains that Salles and his own ideas from the essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technical Reproducibility* (1936) are *identical* in important aspects.

*Le Regard* is one of 53 books that Walter Benjamin included in his reading list in 1939. Together with the bookseller Jean-Yves Lacroix, Jean-Michel Alberola found the editions originally read by Benjamin. In the exhibition, they now form the core of a series of subtle associations, that reflect this *identical* between Benjamin and Salles.

New drawings and lithographs by Alberola are juxtaposed with photographs by Gisèle Freund and Sasha Stone, with astrological maps from the Berlin Archenhold observatory, and specimens from Humboldt University's zoological collection.





Screenshot from 'A Berlin Childhood around 1900—A Project in Progress.' 'Carousel' (2017), © Aura Rosenberg, Frances Scholz, kindly provided by Clages Gallery (Cologne) and Martos Gallery (NY)

Moreover, *COSMOS 1939* is excited to present a very special collaboration: the American and German artists Aura Rosenberg and Frances Scholz created several video works on Walter Benjamin's *Berlin Childhood around 1900* in collaboration with Chantal and Lais Benjamin. Benjamin's granddaughter and great-granddaughter embody and actualize the narrative and take the viewer along on a search for the traces of history in today's Berlin.

Chantal Benjamin herself also presents an installation of lightboxes that give insight into another collection of Walter Benjamin: the children's book collection that was created after the birth of his son Stefan. The childlike quality of gazing at different things with the same, value-free interest and amazement is reflected in all of Benjamin's philosophical work as well as in Georges Salles' philosophy of art.

*COSMOS 1939: Georges Salles / Walter Benjamin* invites visitors to follow these aesthetic impulses and reflect on their own view of art as a cosmic experience.

An exhibition by the Institute for Art and Visual History at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin in cooperation with the AREPO netzwerk junger kulturschaffender e.V., the Center Dominique-Vivante Denon in the Louvre Museum and the Hermann von Helmholtz-Zentrum for Cultural Technology. Supported by the social, cultural and educational sciences department and the women's promotion of the Humboldt University in Berlin, the Association of the friends of Art History, the friends of the Art printing company Idem in Montparnasse and the Foundation Antoine de Galbert in Paris. With the kind support of the Bureau des arts plastiques of the Institut Français and the French Ministry of Culture.

Curated by Jean-Michel Alberola, Caterina Flor Gümpel and Zora Schiffer.

### **Opening**

02.09.2021, 16:00

Philippstraße 13 (Campus Nord, Haus 3, 10115 Berlin)

### **Press tour**

02.09.2021, 11:00

Philippstraße 13 (Campus Nord, Haus 3, 10115 Berlin)

### **Press enquiries**

welcome@tieranatomisches-theater.de

Telefon: +49 (0) 30 2093 12872

### **Websites**

[www.tieranatomisches-theater.de](http://www.tieranatomisches-theater.de)

[www.institutfrancais.de/kultur/kunst-architektur](http://www.institutfrancais.de/kultur/kunst-architektur)

### **Cooperation partners**



Due to the current situation regarding the Corona pandemic, it is not yet foreseeable whether and to what extent we will be able to hold classroom events.