



Shooting people, not angels

by **Hannah Stein** on May 10, 2016

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"The Party is Over"

Winged bodies enveloped in ecstasy, anguish or some exhilarating mix between: *The Destiny of Men* looks at extremes of emotion through dark and polished photographs at Urban Spree from May 13-29.

The minds behind these post-apocalyptic "tableaux vivants", French photographer, Gérard Rancinan, and journalist and editor at **Zigzag-blog**, Caroline Gaudriault, have been collaborating on exhibitions for the past 17 years. As a photojournalist, Rancinan has won six World Press Photo awards and taken portraits of Fidel Castro, Pope John Paul II and Bill Gates. Gaudriault's own work has been featured in *Time Magazine*, *Paris-Match* and *The New York Times*.

Their latest show "The Destiny of Men", including 14 large, theatrical photographs by Rancinan and one calligraphic installation by Gaudriault, addresses the binary of good and evil by investigating human emotion, expression, and inherent curiosity.

What's "The Destiny of Men" all about?

Gérard Rancinan: For this series, we talk about the curiosity of humanity, of human beings. Why the human being? Because the human being is curious.

Caroline Gaudriault: We talk about elevation of humanity, but not in a religious way. The elevation of man is the thing that brought him to his history. A human being is defined by his curious nature... His genius is in his curiosity to go further.

So are you challenging the age-old question of destiny or free will?

CG: We talk about the human, his curiosity, and his savageness. We wanted to speak about this contradiction, this paradox. In a way, he is genius, always inventing himself, inventing the world, going to the moon, but in another way he's very very wild.

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GR: Man can go from the Earth to five billion kilometres away. He can also start wars and kill people. We don't shoot pictures of angels. It's not a religious thing, it's just a metaphor. We don't shoot angels, we shoot people.

How long does it take to prepare and take a photo?

GR: For this series of pictures, about two weeks per photo.

Where do you find your models?

GR: Of course we have casting calls, but also we work with the same people very often. For example, we are shooting a picture here tomorrow and the same models are coming from Paris... But you know, it's easier. They know my universe. They know my bossiness – my way of thinking.

CG: And these models are performers and dancers. It's important that they have that kind of confidence for this work.

Where do you get your inspiration to make each image?

CG: It's different from one series to another. For this one, in each picture, there is an idea of course, but I don't say, "Ah, I have to illustrate this idea." It's not like that.

GR: We searched for 10 to 15 different people with a strong, punk kind of look. We were working on this one photo for a while, but then the main guy in the photo – with the tattoo and the wings— put his head in his hands to rest and I said, "Don't move, don't move!" And we shot the picture just like that, inspired by his position.

G rard, how did you transition from photojournalist to artist?

GR: They're completely different, but also very close. As a journalist, a photographer, I witnessed war, immigration, many dramatic things. I was a reporter on the field but you know, I want to show my work outside of magazines. It was a slow transition. Twenty years ago press was different. Before, I produced a double spread in a magazine, in *Life Magazine* for example, and that was my museum. Today it's the same. It's just not a double spread in a magazine; it's a wall of a gallery or a museum in the world.

Caroline, what is your role as collaborator?

CG: We have our own language, G rard's photography and my writing. And of course, when I write, G rard is the first one to read it and to tell me what he thinks. It's the same for the photos – I assist during the shoots. We share our artistic language. Each of us expresses ourselves in the way we want to.

Can you explain exactly what the calligraphic installation is?

CG: My thoughts on the theme of the destiny of man, and on the photos, are transposed into calligraphy. So you can look at the pictures and read some words, as if surrounded by thought. That's the idea.

The Destiny of Men, May 13-29 | Urban Spree Galerie, Revaler Str. 99, U-Bhf Warschauer Str., Tue-Sun 12-19

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