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8 April  
—  
13 May  
  
2016

**OPENING**

Thursday 7 April  
starting at 06:00 p.m.

**UPCOMING**

**LÀZARO SAAVEDRA**

20 May 2016

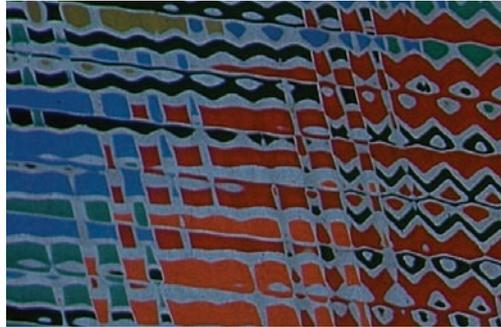
16 July 2016

**CHOICES**

20/21/22 May

# JACQUES VILLEGLÉ

## *Pénélope in Quimper or the Return of Ulysses*



*Pénélope (séquence inédite),*  
18 September 1953



*Pénélope (essay),*  
1953

An exhibition by Jacques Villeglé  
(with the collaboration  
of Raymond Hains)

The two groups presented constitute two exceptions, two extremes and two archetypal examples in Jacques Villeglé's boundless oeuvre.

The first, *Pénélope*, should be shared with Raymond Hains because, notwithstanding the identified contributions of both Villeglé and Hains (and from outside the duo), it is such a communal project. An experimental film project which, after four years (1950-1954) of studies, sketches, endeavours, tests and interminable discussions, ended up... coming to nothing.

Apart from the project's cinematographic dimension falling within the modern history of an art, the seventh, which never stopped resisting the industry and in which we find Hans Richter, Marcel Duchamp, Norman McLaren, a few Letterists and other Situationists, its exceptional nature stems just as widely from the direct use of painting found in it during some of

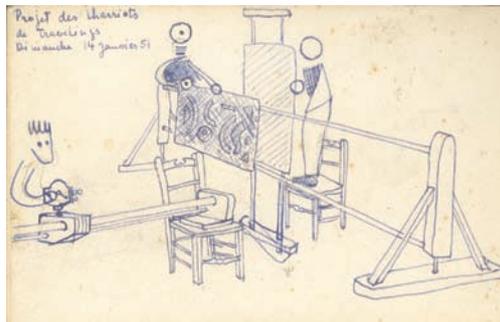
its phases. The reference to Matisse is asserted by Hains and Villeglé, one and another hence posing, like nobody else at the time, the question of the alternative exercise of a medium that modern painters, and Clement Greenberg rounding off the end of the story, had hounded into a corner. We owe the title to Villeglé. *Pénélope*, as he pointed out on many occasions, evokes the stratagem of Ulysses' wife, unravelling at night what she wove during the day, a symbol of incompleteness as much as of ruse, and of the undulating and balmy atmosphere of the Mediterranean - the exact opposite of the capricious wintery weather of the two artists' native Brittany.

This film would have been the outcome of a series of procedures that it would take too long to describe here, of which we note the conception of an Hypnagogoscope (a new kind of camera furnished with fluted lenses), gouache painting, numerous preparatory drawings, collages, engravings, animated film techniques, etc. The pieces exhibited come from the Jacques Villeglé's precious archives. With regard to the fragments of film produced, along with the diverse elements employed, it has often been said that they are abstraction, that the fluted lenses in particular produce deformation and fragmentation, as had been the case during the same period with the letters of a phonetic poem by Camille Bryen, *Hépérile* (1950), to which our two accomplices had joyfully applied this technique for a result that they would call *Hépérile éclaté* (1953).



*Opération Quimpéroise,*  
Esplanade François Mitterrand, 2006

We cannot emphasise enough Pénélope's importance for Jacques Villeglé's future work, an oeuvre that consisted, relatively constantly, of the deforming of signifiers (anonymously ripped posters, sociopolitical alphabets transformed by him) so as to make the subject disappear, sometimes so as to give rise to another. And we know full well that the subject we chase out the door returns by the window: Penelope wove in Saint-Brieuc and in Paris, Ulysses, after a long journey, returns to Quimper.



L'Hypnagogoscope, 1952-53

What was called L'Opération quimpéroise happened in the oeuvre and life of Jacques Villeglé at a moment when he seemed to have renounced tearing down ripped or lacerated posters; it was at his exhibition at the Frac Corse, in 2001, that he announced the end of this practice.

On the occasion of the artist's eightieth birthday, Le Quartier, the contemporary art centre in Quimper, invited Villeglé for an exhibition in his native city. Graphic designer Véfa Lucas was commissioned to create a poster for the exhibition, printed on paper in six different (fluorescent) colours, which were stuck up on the city's walls and billboards. They featured a portrait of the artist. After several weeks, these posters, inevitably ripped and/or covered over by other papers, also ripped in turn, were collected, reframed and mounted on canvas.



Opération quimpéroise, place de Locronan, 2006



Opération quimpéroise, Mairie annexe de Penhars, 2006

Apart from those which joined the Frac Bretagne and the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Quimper collections, almost the entire set of the series is presented here. Admittedly, it is a separate corpus, exceptional in the stricter sense with regard to the ripped posters, and yet central to the questions that Villeglé constantly posed concerning art.

By forging the concept of the 'anonymous rip', he attributed equal importance to the two terms.

Anonymous, in fact, these hands which for diverse reasons about which we know nothing, tear off pieces of posters. Anonymous, these artworks not made by the artist's hand, and whose subjects, which is what Villeglé wished, disappear in favour of the gesture which shakes the signifier. And here, although ripped, but not always, appears the image of the artist, his portrait!

Thus claimed as an artwork, or at least integrated into its process, the image becomes, in a kind of way, a self-portrait! A thundering return of the subject, or at least of the repressed? Not sure... Rather, a retrospective allusion from a lucid and very precise artist, Ulysses the sly one, who is not afraid of playing with the limits of his sphere of activity, so as to better define it.

Jean-Marc Huitorel