

DIX MILLE DEGRÉS SUR LA PLACE DE LA PAIX

Éric Manigaud

born in 1971
lives and works in Saint-Etienne

exhibition

from September 12th 2020
to October 31st 2020

opening

Saturday, September 12th

un dimanche à la galerie

special opening
Sunday, September 13th

galerie Sator

KOMUNUMA

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OPENING HOURS

Wednesday - Saturday
2pm-7pm

and by appointment

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At 8:15 in the morning on 6th August 1945, the atomic bomb dropped by the Enola Gay, a B-29 Superfortress, exploded 580 metres above the city of Hiroshima, home to 350,000 people. The city's warning sirens had not sounded, and no one had time to take shelter. The explosion produced a cyclone of heat and radiation that flattened all homes and buildings within a three-kilometre radius. 90% of the city was destroyed, and 150,000 people perished immediately or in the hours that followed.

On that day, a local press photographer Yoshito Matsushige captured the first images of the devastated city around 11 o'clock. Upon their arrival in Japan in September 1945, American forces confiscated Matsushige's prints and imposed a draconian form of censorship on all records of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. All images shot by Japanese photographers were banned, and the true scale of the tragedy was thus hidden from the world for several months.

The American government gradually allowed foreign correspondents to visit Hiroshima with prior authorization and a military escort. The photographs that they took there were subject to inspection and only those featuring ruined buildings and desolate landscapes were allowed; images of the victims – living or dead – were banned. For years after the bombings, American, Japanese and global audiences could only perceive the event through these documents of decimated cityscapes. The human figure was entirely excluded from all and any visual representations of the atom bomb.

With the 1951 treaty of San Francisco, Japan regained its sovereignty. In the United States, the first images of the victims appeared in Life magazine on 29 September 1952, while the photographs and films that the American army made to document the destruction would remain hidden from public view until the 1970s and 1980s. It was only after 1952 that Japanese photographers were allowed to publish their own images. Amongst the first books produced was Asahi Suppan Sha's *Atomic Bomb N°1 - No More Hiroshima*, which quickly became a reference work. The majority of Eric Manigaud's drawings are based on images in this book.

"Dix mille degrés sur la place de la Paix" ["Ten thousand degrees on the Square of Peace"] is a series of drawings based on these long-forbidden photographs of Hiroshima. This series forms a new chapter of Manigaud's study of the history of the 20th century conducted through political documents subject to state censorship and from the point of view of victims.



Gonichi Kimura, motifs de kimono incrustés par brûlure dans la peau, premier hôpital militaire d'Hiroshima, vers le 15 août 1945
pencil and graphite powder on digigraphie grid, 75 x 60 cm, 2019

Deeply marked by the Chernobyl disaster in 1986 and the political machinations that sought to minimize the event – including those in France – Manigaud discovered several years later Alain Resnais' film *Hiroshima mon amour* and its famous refrain "non, tu n'as rien vu à Hiroshima" ["No, you didn't see anything in Hiroshima"]. Jean-Christophe Bailly's book *L'Instant et son ombre*, which evokes the shadow left by the evaporation of a human being in Hiroshima, and Svetlana Aleksievitch's *La Supplication : Tchernobyl, chroniques du monde après l'apocalypse* were also revelations for the artist. After producing a series around the Algerian independence demonstrations in 1961 in Paris, he became interested in the nuclear tests carried out by the French state in the Algerian desert that same decade. However, faced with the ongoing censorship of images of these tests, he was unable to complete the series of drawings he had planned. It was on the advice of a friend that he discovered *Atomic Bomb N°1 - No More Hiroshima* in a bookshop. This now rare and sought-after photobook would become the basis for the exhibition "Dix mille degrés sur la place de la Paix".



Yoshito Matsushige, Les survivants du pont Miyuki trois heures après le bombardement atomique d'Hiroshima
pencil and graphite powder on paper, 160 x 167 cm, 2019

In recent years, scientists have discovered that the city of Hiroshima, though it was immediately incinerated and reduced to dust, had not in reality 'disappeared'. It was instead atomised in the form of radioactive particles that can still be found on the beaches of the region. This discovery raises the question of what we can and cannot see, and what Éric Manigaud's works invite us to perceive beyond the images themselves.