

Press Coverage for *Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris*

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Announcements

[Réseau Documents d'Artistes - Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris](#)

[Mutual Art - Opening Passages: Photographers Respond To Chicago And Paris](#)

[Chicago Cultural Center](#)
[Loop | Chicago | Illinois | USA](#)
May 04, 2024 - Aug 25, 2024



[Patch - April 19, 2024 - Opening Passages: Artists Respond to Chicago and Paris by Karla Sullivan](#)

Villa Albertine presents a multisite photographic exhibition, plus lectures, conversations, and workshops.



Chicago, April 4, 2024 – Villa Albertine today announced *Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris*, a multi-site exhibition featuring installations in non-traditional venues and community spaces across the city: the Chicago Cultural Center (Loop), 6018 North (Edgewater), BUILD Chicago (Austin), and Experimental Station (Woodlawn). Opening May 4, the exhibition showcases ten photographers—five American, five French—whose work explores the dynamic social landscapes of Chicago and Paris.

Today, the two sister cities are undergoing very similar processes of redefining their urban plans and futures. The unique perspectives of the 10 participating photographers, whether documentary or poetic, weave a new understanding of the issues and identities specific to each metropolis.

Opening Passages is produced by Villa Albertine, the arts institution based in 10 US cities that supports cultural exchanges between the US, France and beyond. Villa Albertine produces major public events, offers residencies and grants for artists, thinkers, and creators across all disciplines, and publishes the magazine *States*. This exhibition is part of Art Design Chicago, a citywide collaboration initiated by the Terra Foundation for American Art that highlights the city's artistic heritage and creative communities. The exhibition is curated by Carl Fuldner.

The artists

United-States : Marzena Abrahamik, Jonathan Michael Castillo, zakkiyyah najeebah dumas-o'neal, Tonika Lewis Johnson, and Sasha Phyrars-Burgess.

France: Gilberto Güiza-Rojas, Karim Kal, Assia Labbas, Marion Poussier, and Rebecca Topakian

Each American photographer selected for this project received creative grants or a residency in France through Villa Albertine and Albertine Foundation, with Ateliers Médicis. The French photographers were selected from among the laureates of the Regards du Grand Paris national photographic commission.

The exhibitions

[The Chicago Cultural Center, May 4 to August 25](#) | Main exhibition, featuring all 10 photographers

[6018 North, May 4 to June 9](#) | Works from five artists on the theme of immigration through the notions of work, diaspora and borders.

BUILD Chicago, April 29 to May 10 | Works by Sasha Phyrars-Burgess and Karim Kal on marginalized communities.

Experimental Station, May 4 to July 31 | Works from three artists on the on the relationship between center and periphery, and each individual's connection to public spaces.

A signature feature of this multi-site exhibition is that each installation is curated to directly resonate with the neighborhood where it's being shown, with reflections on urban divisions, cultural identity, immigrant experiences, waterfronts and green spaces, and the built environment. The exhibition centers stories from the margins, forming a visual collage of life within these two global cities.

Opening Passages: Artists Respond to Chicago and Paris is organized by Villa Albertine in Chicago, curated by Carl Fuldner in association with Pascal Beausse from the Centre national des arts plastiques and Clément Postec from the Ateliers Médicis. It is supported by the Terra Foundation for the American Arts, Albertine Foundation chapter in Chicago, the Department of Cultural Affairs of the City of Chicago, the Institut Français, the Alliance française de Chicago and the France Chicago Center at the University of Chicago.

Français à l'étranger - May 5, 2024 - Chicago : la Villa Albertine propose une exposition de photographes français et américains by Weena Truscelli

Le projet « Opening Passages », de la Villa Albertine de Chicago, est une exposition multi-sites qui présente du 4 mai au 25 août 2024, le travail de dix photographes émergents, français et américains, qui portent leur regard sur l'évolution urbaine et sociale de Chicago et Paris.



Le programme de résidence « Villa Albertine », lancé par le gouvernement français en 2021, soutient la diffusion de la création française, ainsi que les échanges entre artistes français et américains, dans différentes villes des États-Unis.

L'exposition « [Opening passage](#) », organisée par la [Villa Albertine](#) et qui présente dans différents lieux de Chicago, le travail de dix [artistes photographes](#) américains et français, est décrite comme offrant une réflexion sur « les divisions urbaines, l'identité culturelle, les expériences des immigrants, les fronts de mer et les espaces verts, ainsi que l'environnement bâti, en centrant les histoires marginales et en formant un collage visuel de la vie au sein de ces deux villes mondiales. »

L'exposition principale se déroule du 4 mai au 25 août 2024 au [Chicago cultural Center](#), et trois autres espaces accueillent des oeuvres choisies pour leur résonance avec les quartiers où se situent les lieux d'exposition (6018/North, Build Chicago et Experimental Station).

Photographes américains

- Marzena Abrahamik
- Jonathan Michael Castillo

- zakkiyyah najeebah dumas o'neal
- Tonika Johnson
- Sasha Phyers-Burgess

Photographes français

- Gilberto Guiza-Rojas
- Karim Kal
- Assia Labbas
- Marion Poussier
- Rebecca Topakian

The Visualist – May 4, 2024 - Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris

@ [6018North](#)

[6018 N Kenmore Ave, Chicago, IL 60660](#)

Opening Saturday, May 4th, at 6PM

On view through Sunday, June 9th

This exhibition is part of a multi-site photographic project featuring recent series by ten French and American artists who engage with the historical and social dynamics at work in Chicago and Paris. The photographs, whether documentary or poetic, allow each artist to reflect with accuracy and subtlety the issues and identities specific to each city, as well as their differences, similarities, and the ongoing transformations.

The Chicago Cultural Center hosts the main exhibition, featuring the work of all ten photographers. The three other venues BUILD Chicago, Experimental Station, and 6018North exhibit a subset of the artists whose work resonates particularly with the neighborhoods in which these institutions are located and the communities they serve. Related events include screenings, workshops, and conversations.

Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris is part of Art Design Chicago, a citywide collaboration initiated by the Terra Foundation for American Art that highlights the city's artistic heritage and creative communities.

At 6018|North, the works of five of the ten photographers will be exhibited, exploring notions of frontier, immigration, and diasporic identity.

Jonathan Michael Castillo and Gilberto Güiza-Rojas focus on the notion of work, Rebecca Topakian and Marion Poussier question the border or margin, and Marzena Abrahamik takes an interest in the Polish community in Chicago. Each of them, in their own way, highlights multiple, fragmented, or superimposed life trajectories. These works find a particular echo in the Edgewater neighborhood, which is characterized by the cohabitation of communities of very diverse origins.

MARZENA ABRAHAMIK – Return

Born in 1978 in Tarnów, Poland; lives and works in Chicago.

Return is a visual research project that explores the ways in which the Polish diasporic identity continues to re-imagine itself and negotiates the racial landscape of the United States. Abrahamik's images use symbols and icons associated with Polish life and traditions, such as red poppies, swans, and portraits of the Catholic Pope, to delve into the complex processes of cultural translation, where meanings are simultaneously stable and adaptable.

JONATHAN MICHAEL CASTILLO – Immigrant Owned

Born in 1982, lives and works in Chicago.

Throughout Chicago's history, immigrants from all over the world have been a central part of the city's social, cultural, and economic landscape. Since 2017, Jonathan Michael Castillo has been traversing Chicago and its suburbs, photographing the interiors of immigrant-owned shops and the people who run them. In recent years, Chicago's status as a "sanctuary city" has made it a target for political attacks on the national stage. Castillo's sensitive images counter these anti-immigrant narratives, presenting a dignified, multi-dimensional vision of immigrant labor in Chicago.

GILBERTO GÜIZA-ROJAS – Territoire-Travail

Born 1983 in Bogota, lives and works in the Greater Paris area.

The Territoire-Travail (Territory-Work) series examines the process of professional training for refugees in the Paris region. The photographic montages superimpose the original professions with those being learned, highlighting the immense work of adaptation necessary for those who go into exile to continue their life, in another country and another language.

MARION POUSSIER – On est là

Born in 1980 in Rennes, France; lives and works in Paris.

The various redevelopment programs of the banks of the Saint-Denis Canal in Paris have made this changing territory a difficult space to inhabit. However, in these spaces undergoing a process rationalization process, certain forms of life resist and oppose the uses to come. Bodies assert themselves and gestures persist, like a claim to ownership of the place. The title of the series On est là refers to the notion of "being there" that the artist wishes to capture.

REBECCA TOPAKIAN – (n = 6 – 9)

Born in 1989 in Vincennes, lives and works between Yerevan, Armenia, and Paris

Halfway between a scientific undertaking and a poetic reverie, Rebecca Topakian's series (n=6-9) explores the Greater Paris area through exotic birds: the rose-ringed parakeets who escaped from Orly airport in 1974 and have multiplied to over eight thousand. Working with ethologists, the artist captures their flight using infrared photography and reproduces the images on large silk panels. On each of them, she prints phrases taken from various social networks, revealing how differences are perceived and the social inequalities this generates.

[Read more about each artist, and explore the schedule of special events, here: Opening Passages.](https://villa-albertine.org/events/opening-passages-photographers-respond-to-chicago-and-paris/)

<https://villa-albertine.org/events/opening-passages-photographers-respond-to-chicago-and-paris/>

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Foundation for the American Arts, Albertine Foundation chapter in Chicago, the Department of Cultural Affairs of the City of Chicago, the Institut Français, the Alliance française de Chicago and the France Chicago Center at the University of Chicago.

Villa Albertine

Launched in 2021 by the French Embassy in the United States, Villa Albertine is an arts institution that supports cultural exchanges between the United States, France and beyond. Present in 10 American cities, Villa Albertine offers innovative programming nationwide, including 50+ residencies each year for artists, thinkers, and creators across all disciplines; a series of cross-cultural dialogues and events; grants, resources, and incubator programs for professionals in the cultural sphere; and a magazine “States”. Follow Villa Albertine on Instagram, Facebook, X, and LinkedIn – villa-albertine.org.

[Official Website](#)

[More events on this date](#)

Tags: [6018NORTH](#), [Chicago](#), [Edgewater](#), [Gilberto Guiza-Rojas](#), [Jonathan Michael Castillo](#), [Marion Poussier](#), [Marzena Abrahamik](#), [Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris](#), [Rebecca Topakian](#)

[Choose Chicago – May 4, 2024 - Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris](#)



Opening Passages brings together ten photographic series by French and American artists that survey the dynamic social landscapes of Chicago and Paris. American artists include Marzena Abrahamik, Jonathan Michael Castillo, zakkiyyah najeebah dumas o’neal, Tonika Johnson, and Sasha Phyers-Burgess, while the French are Gilberto Guiza-Rojas, Karim Kal, Assia Labbas, Marion Poussier, and Rebecca Topakian.

This multi-venue exhibition also features site-specific installations in venues and community spaces spread across the city, including [6018|North](#) (Edgewater), [BUILD Chicago](#) (Austin), and [Experimental Station](#) (Woodlawn). These various activations throughout the city feature work that directly resonates with the neighborhoods where the venues are situated and speak to the socio-cultural themes that structure the overall exhibition, which reflects on urban divisions, cultural identity, immigrant experiences, waterfronts and green spaces, and the built

environment. The exhibition centers stories from the margins, forming a visual collage of life within these two global cities.

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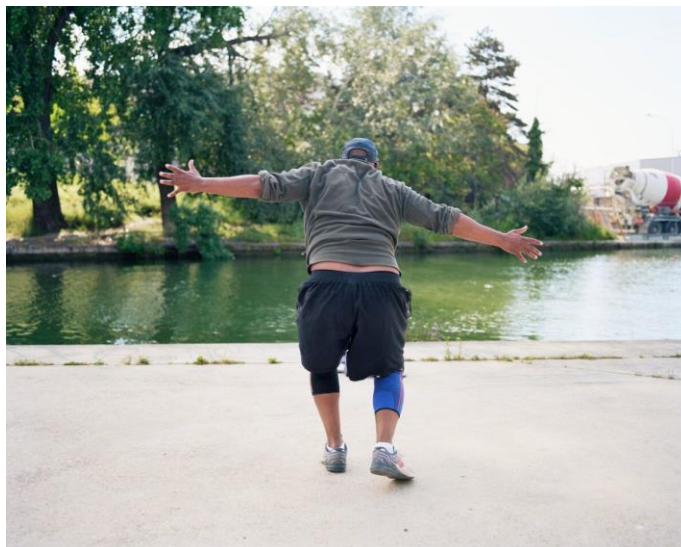
Opening Passages is part of [Art Design Chicago](#), a citywide collaboration initiated by the Terra Foundation that highlights the city's artistic heritage and creative communities and Villa Albertine's City/Cité program that seeks to foster a multidisciplinary transatlantic conversation on urban issues. Pairing metropolitan areas from both countries, it brings together diverse stakeholders, including researchers, artists, architects, journalists, urban planners, community activists, culture professionals, and political leaders.

Gallery Talk – Wednesday, May 8, 12-1pm

Join us for a Gallery Talk inside the exhibition *Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris* at The Chicago Cultural Center.

Curators **Carl Fuldner** and **Pascal Beausse** (Cnap) will host a conversation between **Jonathan Michael Castillo**, **Gilberto Güiza-Rojas**, **Tonika Lewis Johnson**, **Karim Kal** and **Marion Poussier**. The discussion will focus on documentary strategies for representing communities.

[F-STOP - May 4, 2024 - Opening Passages @ Chicago Cultural Center](#)



© Marion Poussier

Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris
May 4th – August 25th

Gallery Talk: May 8th | 12 – 1 PM

“In conjunction with Art Design Chicago, the **Chicago Cultural Center** is pleased to present [Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris](#). Opening Passages brings together ten photographic series by French and American artists that survey the dynamic social landscapes of Chicago and Paris. American artists include Marzena Abrahamik, Jonathan Michael Castillo, zakkiyyah najeebah dumas o’neal, Tonika Johnson, and Sasha Phyers-Burgess, while the French artists includes Gilberto Guiza-Rojas, Karim Kal, Assia Labbas, Marion Poussier, and Rebecca Topakian.”

Chicago Cultural Center
78 E Washington St
Chicago, IL

[Do312 - May 4, 2024 - Opening Passages: Artists Respond to Chicago and Paris](#)

Opening Passages brings together ten photographic commissions by French and American artists that survey the dynamic social landscapes of Chicago and Paris. The artists presented are Chicago-based artists Marzena Abrahamik, Jonathan Michael Castillo, zakkiyyah najeebah dumas o’neal, Tonika Johnson and Sasha Phyers-Burgess, and Paris-based Gilberto Guiza-Rojas, Karim Kal, Assia Labbas, Marion Poussier, and Rebecca Topakian.

This multi-venue exhibition also features site-specific installations in non-traditional venues and community spaces spread across the city, including Experimental Station (Hyde Park), BUILD Chicago (Austin), 6018North (Edgewater), and The Salt Shed (Goose Island). These various activations throughout the city feature work that directly resonates with the neighborhoods where the venues are situated and speak to the socio-cultural themes that structure the overall exhibition, which reflects on urban divisions, cultural identity, immigrant experiences, waterfronts and green spaces, and the built environment. The exhibition centers stories from the margins, forming a visual collage of life within these two global cities.

Opening Passages: Artists Respond to Chicago and Paris is part of Art Design Chicago. The exhibition is supported in part by the FACE Foundation, and is curated by Carl Fuldner.

Admission is FREE
Open Daily, 10am–5pm
Exhibitions close 15 minutes before the building closes
(Closed Holidays)

Plan Your Visit
Chicago Cultural Center
78 E. Washington St.
Chicago, IL 60602

Take CTA to Chicago Cultural Center

Chicago Gallery News - May 8, 2024 - Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris: Gallery Talk at the Chicago Cultural Center

Chicago Cultural Center
78 E. Washington
Chicago, IL 60602

Save to calendar



Presented as part of Art Design Chicago

Exhibit Hall

May 4 – August 25, 2024

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Image: Karim Kal (self portrait), Tonika Lewis Johnson ©Nyjah Johnson, Marion Poussier ©Leila Graindorge, Jonathan Michael Castillo ©Daniel Hud, Gilberto Güiza-Rojas ©Julia Amarger

Reviews

[Chicago Sun Times - February 27, 2024 - Diversity of cultures and perspectives reflected in new exhibits, events at Chicago Cultural Center by Erica Thompson \(extract\)](#)

The center has announced its eclectic lineup of exhibitions, concerts, dance performances, film screenings, talks and other free events this spring and summer.

From May 4 through Aug. 25, attendees can also view 10 photos depicting places and reflecting on identity and culture in “Opening Passages: Artists Respond to Chicago and Paris.” The multi-venue exhibition stretches across several locations in the city, and features work from Chicago- and Paris-based artists.



Immigrant owned, Yuzhen, Yummy Yummy Noodles, Chicago (Chinatown).” The photo can be seen in “Opening Passages: Artists Respond to Chicago and Paris,” which runs from May 4 through Aug. 25 at Chicago Cultural Center. Jonathan Castillo

“We also strive to present art from all over the world,” Villafranca said. “And so any time that Chicago artists can be in conversation with national and international artists, that’s also important to [show].”

[NewCity - May 3, 2024 - Today In Culture, Friday, May 3, 2024: History Of House Music At Navy Pier | Collaboraction Building New Home | Haven Theater Closing by Ray Pride \(extract\)](#)

ART

“Opening Passages: Photographers Respond To Chicago And Paris” Starts Saturday

A multi-site exhibition featuring installations in non-traditional venues and community spaces across Chicago via Villa Albertine opens May 4: Chicago Cultural Center (Loop), 6018|North (Edgewater), BUILD Chicago (Austin), and Experimental Station (Woodlawn) showcase ten photographers—five American, five French—“whose work explores the dynamic social landscapes of Chicago and Paris. The unique approaches of the photographers highlight the historic processes of urban redefinition taking place in both cities with subtlety and accuracy.” More [here](#).

[Chicago Tribune - May 28, 2024 - Top 10 for art in Chicago: Georgia O’Keeffe to Art on the Mart in a 2024 summer of firsts by Lori Waxman \(extract\)](#)

An unusual number of firsts are taking place in Chicago museums this summer, from older artists getting their due to under-examined histories being recovered to emergent talents making their local debuts.

“Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris”: Dynamic social landscapes are the chosen subject for the 10 artists – five American, five French – in this multisite exhibit. Highlights include Sasha Phylars-Burgess’s efforts to teach traditional darkroom techniques to residents in Clichy-sous-Bois, Marzena Abrahamik’s chronicling of Polish-Chicago migration in reverse, and Rebecca Topakian’s research into the rose-ringed parakeets that entered France via an airport cargo accident. Through Aug. 25 at the Chicago Cultural Center and other venues; more information at artdesignchicago.org

[Chicagomag - May 9, 2024 - An Art-forward French Connection by Edward Robert McClelland](#)

A citywide exhibit explores immigration in France and Chicago – and how both have grappled with new residents.



Maria, Miranda's Salon, Chicago (Pilsen) – 2018

The French are back in Chicago. In the most Gallic scene in the city since the days of DuSable, or perhaps of Marquette and Joliet, men greeted one another with pecks on the cheek, the crowd sipped wine and ate brie spread across soft medallions of spongy bread, and a representative from the French consulate circulated through the crowd, greeting everyone in her native language.

The occasion was last Saturday night's opening of a photo exhibit, "[Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris](#)," which features images, and artists, from both sister cities. The site was 6018|North, a rundown mansion at 6018 N. Kenmore Ave. which has been converted into a community art and environmental advocacy space.

What exactly do Chicago and Paris have in common, besides being founded by the French? Both have attracted immigrants from all over the world. "Opening Passages" is a citywide exhibit, with photos on display at the Cultural Center, but immigration was the theme of the work on display at 6018|North, since Edgewater has such a large foreign-born population: Somali, Ethiopian, Nigerian, Bosnian, to name a few nations represented by restaurants there. Specifically, said Axelle Moleur, cultural attache of the French Consulate, Chicago resembles Clichy, Hauts-de-Seine, a northern suburb of Paris where a third of the residents were born outside France, mainly in Africa. It's a timely exhibit, given Chicago's current struggles to integrate tens of thousands of migrants from South America.

"We are working with an institution based in the Greater Paris area, which is called the Atelier Médicis in Clichy, which is a city at the north of Paris, which is in the poorest area of France," Moleur said. "So it's kind of experiencing the same issues as the South Side of Chicago, of course, a lot of similarities but differences – not so many guns. Integration, for instance, a lot of social and racial tensions. We've been connecting institutions and communities and artists from both areas for several years. And we name this program Clichycago, which is a contraction of these two places."

Moleur pronounced our city's name as "Shee-cah-go." Since the French originally named Chicago, maybe that's proper.



Dora, Kaneshie Supermarket, Chicago (Uptown) - 2022

Rebecca Topkian, a French-Armenian artist, was flown into Chicago for a week to open the exhibit — her first time in the city. Her contribution was a pair of textile murals representing parakeets, which hung from the ceiling's exposed timbers. In France, parakeets are scorned as "invasive species" — much like foreigners. Topkian translated the legend on each mural for me, and explained the connection between birds and immigrants.

"So this one says, 'it's another family to feed' (c'est une famille de plus a nourrir)," Topkian said. "This one says, 'what does invasive mean?' (mais qu'est-ce du'invasif veut dire?) So basically, I made a parallel between how people perceive parakeets and immigrants because they're exotic and considered invasive, and people perceive it in a very negative way. Some [parakeets] were imported and they escaped from the airport, and they're bred and then people say they eat the other birds' food and kill squirrels and this kind of thing. And then I (asked) a scientist and they said that actually, no, they're not dangerous for other species. But people perceive them like this because they're exotic. You wonder, what are they talking about, birds or about humans?"

Jonathan Michael Castillo is a Chicago artist whose contribution is a series of photographs of immigrant businesses: a Jewish butcher shop in Rogers Park, a Palestinian bakery in Palos Hills, a Chinese restaurant in Des Plaines, a laundromat in Little Village, a salon in Pilsen. On a wall was projected a video Castillo took in the kitchen of Badou Senegal, a restaurant on Howard Street.

Gilberto Güiza-Rojas, a Colombian-French photographer, recorded immigrants performing manual labor in Clichy — mixing cement, cleaning houses. In the photo on display at 6018|North, an immigrant wields a vacuum cleaner inside a fancy apartment.

I asked the French if they were aware of their country's influence on Chicago. We're not as French as New Orleans, or even Detroit, but our law and financial district is named La Salle Street, after the explorer who descended the Mississippi River.

"There is a French history in the U.S.," Moleur asserted. "The British won, but there is something French here, and it is interesting to have Jean Baptiste Pointe du Sable as the founder." Marion Poussier, another photographer here for the week, was less aware of the Chicago-France connection. She hadn't heard of Marquette, Joliet, or La Salle, but when I mentioned du Sable, she brightened.

"Ah, that is why it is Du Sable Drive," she said.

Exactly.

The exhibit at 6018|North is open from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturdays, until June 9. The main "Opening Passages" exhibit is on the fourth floor of the Cultural Center until August 25. Visit, and celebrate Chicago's French connection.

Newcity - May 30, 2024 - Villa Albertine's Long Reach: A Review of "Opening Passages-Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris" by Susan Aurinko



Jonathan Michael Castillo, "A Plus Items and More, Chicago (Kilbourn Park)," 2022, archival pigment print/Photo:Jonathan Michael Castillo and Villa Albertine

Villa Albertine has created a multi-location exhibition at several venues in Chicago in which ten emerging photographers respond to Paris and Chicago—the urban similarities and differences between the two cities. Curator Carl Fuldner, and associate curators Pascal Beausse from Chap and Clement Postec from Ateliers Médicis, have gathered the artists and given them a brief to "explore the dynamic social landscapes of Chicago and Paris," each in his or her own way. The didactic information for the exhibition is clear, the artists are to "offer reflections on urban divisions, cultural identity, immigrant experiences, waterfronts and green spaces and the built environment. Each of the artists has a novel approach to the brief, but all the work is interesting and worth experiencing. The exhibition I will be referring to is at the Chicago Cultural Center, but there are also works by the same artists at 6018 North, BUILD Chicago and Experimental Station. The goal, says Villa Albertine, is "to foster greater transatlantic dialogues among the artists and fruitful exchanges with the public.



Tonika Johnson, Lauren from "Belonging" series/Photo: Tonika Johnson

An image by Chicago's own Tonika Lewis Johnson, the first American recipient of the Regards du Grand Paris, opens the exhibition. Three young men pose at the Chatelet Metro station in Paris, regarding the photographer levelly, without emotion. In another image of Johnson's, an equally disaffected woman sits in her apartment in La Courneuve. French artist and journalist Assia Labbas has cleverly mounted transparencies in long horizontal shadowboxes flanking a projection onto a screen in an impressive and engaging display. Chicagoan zakkiyyah najeebah dumas-o'neal presents a series of peaceful, large-scale images of Lake Michigan, interspersed with images from her family's history. Jonathan Michael Castillo, who was born in L.A. and now lives and works in Chicago, photographs immigrant-owned shops across the Chicago area. The images portray both the owners and their merchandise - clearly showing that persistence and motivation to create and maintain these shops is truly something to be proud of.



Assia Labbas, installation view of “RER B-ANLIEUES” at Chicago Cultural Center, 2024/Photo: Susan Aurinko

Marzena Abrahamik, who was born in Poland and now lives in Chicago, has created collages that do not address her heartbreaking ten-year separation from her mother who, when Abrahamik was five years old, fled Communist Poland to seek work in the United States. Rather, her collage “Return,” in this exhibition, explores the reverse phenomenon—people who emigrate back to Poland at retirement for healthcare and to be with family who are still there. In a powerful installation, French artist Rebecca Topakian has framed multiple series of feathers from rose-ringed parakeets, which are native to Sub-Saharan Africa, but ultimately ended up in Paris through a cargo accident at Roissy- Charles-de-Gaulle airport in the 1970s. Taking a cue from the sometimes-derogatory language of the internet, she likens the transplanted birds to other immigrants, those who “don’t belong here.”

There are also works by Marion Poussier, Gilberto Güiza-Rojas, Karim Kal, Sasha Phylars-Burgess. The concept is interesting, to say the least, and the idea of spreading the work throughout four venues in various demographic areas shows that Villa Albertine brilliantly follows through on its mission.

“Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris” is on view at Chicago Cultural Center through August 25; at 6018|North, 6018 North Kenmore, through June 9; at BUILD Chicago, 5100 West Harrison, through May 10; and at Experimental Station, 6100 South Blackstone, through July 27. More information [here](#).

Sixty inches from center - June 12, 2024 - Look Longer: Reflections on Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris by Jackson Roach, Mrittika Ghosh

Ghosh and Roach go on a journey across the city to a multi-venue and multi-neighborhood project *Opening Passages* that de-centers the Loop as the main hub for cultural creativity in Chicago.



Image: Installation view in a corner of the Chicago Cultural Center. On the left wall of the image are three of Marion Poussier's photographs from *On est là* (2021), and the adjacent wall are four of zakkiyyah najeebah dumas o'neal's photographs of Lake Michigan, with four more mounted on platforms on the ground. Poussier's photographs are three scenes from beside the Canal St. Denis, and dumas o'neal's are close-ups of light hitting the lake in varying hues.

Courtesy of Villa Albertine.



This article is presented in conjunction with [Art Design Chicago](#), an initiative of the Terra Foundation for American Art that seeks to expand narratives of American art with an emphasis on the city's diverse and vibrant creative cultures and the stories they tell.

"A city is first people and other life forms inhabiting a space together," says *Opening Passages* co-curator Pascal Beausse. Framing cities as a clustering of life forms brings up large questions about urban life: what does it mean to inhabit a big city while transforming it? What can we make of interdependency that inevitably emerges with the organization of life? How can we sensitively interact with each other and our surroundings? These questions, among others, are a starting point for the work in this trans-Atlantic group exhibition, a collaboration between Villa Albertine, Ateliers Médicis, and CNAP (Centre National des Arts Plastiques).

[*Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris*](#) is an exhibition of five French and five American photographers across four Chicago venues. The American photographers who explore these questions are [Marzena Abrahamik](#), [Jonathan Castillo](#), [zakkiyyah najeebah dumas o'neal](#), [Tonika Lewis Johnson](#), and [Sasha Phyers-Burgess](#). The French artists include [Gilberto Gūiza-Rojas](#), [Karim Kal](#), [Assia Labbas](#), [Marion Poussier](#), and [Rebecca Topakian](#).

Transcription of audio interview with co-curator Pascal Beausse recorded by Jackson Roach: “Our cultures, our city likes to imagine that there’s center and a periphery. We need to rethink it. I mean, everywhere, it’s the center of the world. Everywhere, a very specific life form is trying to establish its life and to make connections with other lives and to live peacefully. It’s the center of the world.”

From a logistical standpoint, seeing this exhibition in its entirety requires traveling from one end of Chicago to another—in addition to the large Cultural Center exhibition, there are also works installed at [6018 North](#) in Edgewater, [BUILD Chicago](#) in Austin, and [Experimental Station](#) in Woodlawn. A tenet of the exhibition is to challenge the notion of a cultural “center” in the city, made evident by the decision to make all four venues free and accessible to various neighborhoods on the outskirts of Chicago. It isn’t just in theory that we should de-center conventional spaces like large museums and galleries when exhibiting art, but in practice. As much as the Loop and its many beautiful art spaces are building blocks of Chicago’s cultural landscape, Villa Albertine and Atelier Médicis demonstrate that an experimental space in Woodlawn, a community nonprofit in Austin, or a renovated home/gallery space in Edgewater could (and should) be treated *equally* as artistic hearts of the city.

While the three satellite venues feature only some overlapping artists, certain themes about urban life echo throughout the ambitious exhibition, creating dialogue between two diverse, sprawling cities in *Opening Passages*. This piece is divided along three of those throughlines, and incorporates interview clips as well as other sonic elements embedded throughout incorporating French language.

Transit/Mouvement

Field recording by Jackson Roach: riding the Red Line from South to North Side of Chicago.

After attending a panel featuring Parisian photojournalist Assia Labbas and Chicago-based artists Tonika Lewis Johnson and zakkiyyah najeebah dumas o'neal having illuminating conversations about movement and change through their respective cities, I hopped on the Red Line from Garfield Station to the end of the the north side for errands in Little India. I sat in the train for nearly forty minutes, as Labbas did on the RER-B, the Parisian train that runs the length of the city from north to south. In her installation *RER B-ANLIEUS* (on view at the Cultural Center as well as Experimental Station), Labbas presents the train line as an “axis that reflects the scale of the region’s socio-economic disparities.” The slideshow she creates using photographs taken in peripheral neighborhoods of Paris is mounted on the walls in retro Kodachrome slides as well as projected onto a screen accompanied by the voices of riders discussing their journeys.

Transcription of audio interview with artist Assia Labbas recorded by Jackson Roach: “So the train, you see the windows of the train, they look like the frame of a slide. Basically, the project is [exploring] when you take the train, you always see the same landscape, obviously, because it’s always taking the same road. And when you look at

the television, you always see the same images about the suburbs and the type of population who live there. So I wanted to slow down. And that's why in the documentary, pictures are going slowly and slowly. And also [adding] other images like the neighborhood or parks, just basic stuff that is not extraordinary, but just daily life. What I wanted to do is change the image that there is, to show something else, to show another image that we don't see usually on television."



Image: Installation view, *RER B-ANLIEUS*, 2021. A man just finished adhering a poster of Assia Labbas' *RER B-ANLIEUS* onto a brick wall along the outer perimeter of Experimental Station, Woodlawn. The piece looks like a strip of film for a Kodak carousel projector, with vignette-style photographs from different locations in Paris along the RER-B train line as the slides. Courtesy of Villa Albertine.

Similarly, Karim Kal's work is framed by a train line, but shifts the focus away from people and onto the infrastructure and built environment on the outskirts of the Parisian landscape. If Labbas' gaze is *out* (through the train's windows), Kal's is *in* (through the brutal structures of the exurbs onto the dark voids they frame). He casts life with an uncanny atmosphere with his large-scale, enigmatic photographs of stations and their features, including security cameras and [Parisian hostile architecture](#) following the Ligne D. His photographs bring us into a sense of eerie, empty darkness not often associated with a bustling city. There is an opacity to the void-like darkness framed by train tunnels, platforms, or [desire paths](#). The thread of a city is, to some extent, always hidden from us—everything conceals something else. He says, what interests him in his work is our "collective responsibility to create spaces for people to live." With one series of five photographs in the Cultural Center exhibition, more of Kal's work is also installed at BUILD Chicago, in Austin.

Transcription of audio interview with artist Karim Kal recorded by Jackson Roach: "I tried to produce something like a mysterious representation with a kind of poetry, but also a kind of inquiétude [discomfort]. I like the idea that I'm not showing everything, that it's a kind of photography that doesn't reveal, it's a photography that make[s] a bit of darkness."



Image: Installation view, Karim Kal, *Ligne Dée* (2017). Five large black-and-white photographs with images of and around stations on the outskirts of Paris. Above, one of Rebecca Topakian's silk flags is hung from the ceiling. On the adjacent left wall is a glimpse of Gilberto Güiza-Rojas' collages. Courtesy of Villa Albertine.

Rebecca Topakian's work encourages us to look up in the rush of the city. Her series, named ($n=6-9$) referencing the enzyme that gives the parakeets of Paris their particular bright color, is printed on silk flags and hung above the exhibition. These art pieces were produced during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, and are fuzzy pictures of "invasive" Parisian parakeets printed onto silk flags and hung from the ceiling. It would be easy to miss her work if one doesn't take the time to look above, and it takes a moment to discern what the pictures are of, given that the parakeets are blurred by motion. In the peculiar citywide stillness, she noticed a nesting colony of birds just down the block from her apartment and began to photograph them. The parakeets and other nonhuman ecology of the city continued onward, without regard for the borders and restrictions inherent to human uses of space. In such a fraught moment for humanity, Topakian's turn to document the movements of other life forms, with whom we share space, shows how much the city is in motion, even if we are still.

Transcription of audio interview with artist Rebecca Topakian recorded by Jackson Roach: "Scientists who studied birds try to understand their perception of territory by putting on them a very human vision of territory. That is a vision where you have to fight or be in competition for your territory. And it's not the same for birds. They're very okay with respecting each other. So it's a very different perception of territory compared to humans. Nature doesn't really care about [possessiveness]. This is ours. This is yours. They find a way to live together."

Travail/Work

Field recording by Jackson Roach: installation at the Chicago Cultural Center.

"One subject is shown to have previously been a journalist holding a microphone as if interviewing a ladder, now being trained as a construction worker. This

transformation from someone whose work was once highly visible to one whose work falls into what Güiza-Rojas describes as “invisible” is particularly striking.”

Métro, boulot, dodo is a cheeky French idiom akin to ‘another day, another dollar,’ specific to the working-class Parisian experience. Translated, the rhythm of urban life is *métro*/subway, *boulot*/a job or a gig, *dodo*/baby-talk for going to sleep. The representation of work life or hustle in Paris is depicted in Gilberto Güiza-Rojas’s series *Territoire-Travail*/Territory-Work, which consists of five collages. Each features an image of migrants taking on new trades at Afpa, a vocational training center outside the city. Superimposed on these portraits is an image of the same subject performing gestures of the job they had before arriving in Paris and their need to take up a new trade, which is often an “invisible” profession.

Transcription of audio interview with artist Gilberto Güiza-Rojas recorded by Jackson Roach: “*Et donc, par la suite, ça fait plus de dix ans que j’ai photographié les gens qui ont des métiers qui les rendent invisibles. Donc, qui sont des métiers plutôt manuels et souvent pas qualifiés et assez précarisés. Et donc, depuis le début, je me suis dit que je voulais construire des images avec les gens.* [And so...for ten years, I have photographed people who have jobs that render them invisible, which are often manual labor and precarious jobs. So then, from the beginning, I told myself that I wanted to build images with human subjects.]”

Güiza-Rojas’ use of collage and staging innovatively layers the different professions of his subjects, and by extension, the different identities and lives they’ve held across their migratory trajectories. One subject is shown to have previously been a journalist holding a microphone as if interviewing a ladder, now being trained as a construction worker. This transformation from someone whose work was once highly visible to one whose work falls into what Güiza-Rojas describes as “invisible” is particularly striking. This series honors the individuality and the complexity of their journeys beyond their work which keeps the city functioning.



Image: Installation view of three of Güiza-Rojas’ pieces from *Territoire-Travail* (2018). From left to right, one is a picture of a man performing janitorial work inside a building with one hand and working on a laptop with the other; the second is a man in a construction hat at a construction site, staged to look like he is working on a red lamp as an electrician; the third is a man in a neon construction vest and hat holding a large microphone up to a ladder. Courtesy of Villa Albertine.

On the American side, Jonathan Castillo's work also explores how migrant subjects make their way through work and environments in a new city, specifically photographing business owners throughout Chicago's diverse neighborhoods. His portraits are set against intensely colorful backdrops of eclectic shops and restaurants that are typically crammed with culturally specific goods (Ukrainian and Polish flags in one; saris from Devon Ave in another; boxes of fortune cookies in the back of a restaurant). We can feel the earnestness with which these businesses are built, and see the tangible pieces of their own cultures that are manifested in their American entrepreneurial endeavors, much like how *Territoire-Travail* brings to the forefront the implications of work as a migrant in both cities.

Transcription of audio interview with artist Jonathan Castillo recorded by Jackson Roach: "When I started the project, I initially kind of thought that I was doing it because we're going to be losing this. We're going to lose all these small businesses. And I wanted to photograph them, but the more time I spent doing it, the more I realized that's not the case. We're not losing these small businesses. They just kind of go in cycles, you know? Like, you get people that open businesses because this is a way to have autonomy, care for your family, make your money, and often, if you can't afford childcare and you can have the kid in the business, it's a way to also kill two birds with one stone. And then those kids go up and go to college and then you suddenly [question] maybe you don't need that store anymore, right? So that store closes down because mom and dad don't need to do that anymore because they've raised their kids. So these things go in cycles. Sometimes the stores become so successful that they pass down to generations of the family, or they pass from one family to another. So the more I've done this, the less I'm lamenting the loss of something. It's much more of a celebratory thing and an acknowledgment that these places can be very ephemeral individually, but collectively, they're not going anywhere, I think."

Castillo's scenes of migration and work, along with those of Gilberto Güiza-Rojas, render rhythmic aspects of city life as a migrant worker (whether due to the nature of the labor or the position of the laborers in the city) hypervisible.

"Photographs ask a lot of questions if you do them well," said Castillo. "When you look at a portrait, there's more room for the viewer to see, say things like, *well, I wonder what's going on in this person's head. What are they thinking? What is this person's life like? I think when people ask questions about one another, that's how people connect.*" In their thoughtfully staged images of workers who may not often be considered for long enough to bring up these questions, Castillo and Güiza-Rojas invite us to slow down to witness the marginalized labor (and laborers) within the mechanisms of the city.

Change/Changement

Field recording by Jackson Roach: a flock of Chicago's parakeets.

The urban legend backstory for Topakian's work is that in the 1970s, a bus carrying parakeets being imported as exotic pets via Charles de Gaulle airport crashed, disastrously releasing a new species into the delicate Parisian avian ecosystem. Iterations of the same parakeet invasion occurred in global cities across Europe around the same time many people were importing animals as decorative household ornaments from tropical colonies.

“The urban legend backstory for Topakian’s work is that in the 1970s, a bus carrying parakeets being imported as exotic pets via Charles de Gaulle airport crashed, disastrously releasing a new species into the delicate Parisian avian ecosystem.”

Transcription of audio interview with artist Rebecca Topakian recorded by Jackson Roach: “What is interesting is that it’s a bird that comes, either from Africa or from Asia, so parts of the world that have been colonized by France. So you have different layers of reading this. In the sixties, or maybe fifties, it was very common to have this kind of exotic bird at your house [as] decoration. It was cool to have an exotic bird. They started to breed and now, there’s parakeets everywhere. I found it interesting that it’s this exotic animal, imported from areas of the world that had been colonized. And people used to really love [having] it in a cage. Of course, it’s more subtle than that, but symbolically that’s what you hear. It’s like people loved [them] in cages, but when it got freed, it’s like, oh, it’s invasive, it’s dangerous.”



Image: Installation view at 6018 | North of two of Topakian’s silk flags hanging from the ceiling. In the foreground is a light-colored flag with trees in the corners and a couple of small birds in flight visible. The words *c’est une famille plus à nourrir* are printed in white in the top left corner. The second flag is partially covered behind the first. It is a picture of the dark sky with bright birds in flight, and the words *mais qu’est-ce qu’invasif veut dire?* in white text in the bottom right corner. They are hanging above an exhibition space that is a converted home, with two chairs and a long table. Courtesy of Villa Albertine.

“At any given time, a city is moving towards a drastically different iteration of itself, as are its various life forms; Topakian’s birds are a reminder that whether a change is labeled and interpreted as harmful or beneficial, change is in the end simply a constant fact of urban life, and the decision is ours how we interact with it.”

Her pieces *mais qu’est-ce qu’invasif veut dire?* (meaning: but what does invasive mean?), *c’est une famille plus à nourrir* (that’s one more family to feed), and *ils ne sont pas fautifs mais ce n’est pas leur milieu* (it’s not their fault, but it’s not their environment), are a mixture of lines from comment sections both from articles about the “problem” of the “invasive” parakeets as well as about the influxes of migrants from many former colonies into Paris. Chicago is currently also in the process of integrating tens of thousands of migrants from South America and concurrently the geography of Paris is being rapidly reworked by the coming 2024 Summer

Olympics, both cities are in moments of change that will mark significant changes in their ever-shifting landscapes.

At any given time, a city is moving towards a drastically different iteration of itself, as are its various life forms; Topakian's birds are a reminder that whether a change is labeled and interpreted as harmful or beneficial, change is in the end simply a constant fact of urban life, and the decision is ours how we interact with it.

Transcription of audio interview with co-curator Pascal Beausse recorded by Jackson Roach: "You can have [a] more interesting understanding of the world today, which is always in evolution, which is in a constant reinvention every day. And we are part of it. We are making it together through our gestures, [our] decisions."

The evolution of a place and its people are shaped by many forces: economic, ecological, cultural, and political. Marzena Abrahamik's work reflects the changes in cultural attitudes resulting from conflicts in Europe and a subsequent influx of Polish migrants to Chicago. Abrahamik's deeply personal and political narratives highlight how countries and homelands shape us, as much as we shape them. Her series, *Return*, consists of five framed photographs and two larger collages which she installed on-site. The photos in the collage are a *mélange* of family photos, staged photographs, and Polish iconography (recognizable national symbols and mascots, Catholic icons, magazine photos, Polish landscapes). Collaged into large glass frames, Abrahamik's images appear to be floating pieces of Polish and American identities, both on cultural and familial levels. Much like Topakian's project hints at, though, there is an element of a melancholic perpetual foreignness that permeates Abrahamik's work, a powerful meditation on the impossibility of assimilation into Chicago for many Polish migrants.

Transcription of audio interview with artist Marzena Abrahamik recorded by Jackson Roach: "What does it mean to have a home or multiple homes, or what does it mean to belong? That idea of home, homeland, being homesick and never quite feeling like you belong anywhere is, I think, another condition of being an immigrant, right? It's never quite fully formed. The way that American culture has been structured is in some ways penetrable, but impenetrable. And no matter what we do and how we want to belong, we kind of don't, you know?"



Image: Installation view, two collages by Marzena Abrahamik at the Chicago Cultural Center. The collages are two large glass frames hung against white walls with printed-out images organized and taped onto them. Courtesy of Villa Albertine.

Environment/*Environnement*

Field recording: Lake Michigan in the summer, sounds of water and people.

The title of Marion Poussier's series, *On est là/We Are Here*, references a French protest chant popularized during the 2018 [gilets jaunes](#)/yellow vests protests. She photographs people along the Canal Saint-Denis, which runs through some of the most underserved neighborhoods of Paris, showing urban waterfronts as a critical public space. The community in this part of Paris will be heavily impacted by the construction of new routes and structural changes being made to the city in preparation for the 2024 Summer Olympics. Through her art practice, Poussier is capturing crucial moments of a community's relationship to its environment at risk of erasure.

Transcription of audio interview with artist Marion Poussier recorded by Jackson Roach: *“Mon travail a consisté à me rendre sur place et essayer d’observer les populations qui vivent là et quels sont les usages qu’elles ont de ce lieu-là, qui sont leurs usages propres. Et je me suis concentrée précisément sur les berges du canal, donc comment les gens vivent sur le bord de l’eau et comment ils utilisent aussi parfois l’eau. Et avec l’idée que tout ça allait bien sûr disparaître, parce qu’avec les processus de gentrification, les populations les plus marginalisées ne vont pas profiter des changements et vont être repoussées plus loin encore en banlieue. Et donc voilà, c’est la disparition de ces gestes-là et de cette utilisation-là des lieux qui va disparaître. Donc je me suis attachée à rencontrer des personnes et à vraiment observer quels étaient leurs usages propres et leur manière de vivre dans ce lieu-là. [My work consisted of going there and trying to observe the populations who live there and what their uses are of the space. I focused specifically on the banks of the canal, how people live on the water’s edge and how they use the water. And with the idea that all this would of course disappear, because with the processes of gentrification, the most marginalized populations will not benefit from change and will be pushed even further into the suburbs. And so there it is, it is the disappearance of these interactions and this use of spaces that will disappear. So I set out to meet people and observe their customs and their way of living in that place.]”*

One of Poussier's images, *Joy and Harry*, shows two adolescents in conversation under a bridge against a graffiti-filled wall, with one cupping the other's chin intimately. Others show groups of friends, or people using the canal water for washing. This series shows how intricately the environment and access to the canal are tied to the lives of the neighborhood inhabitants, and the key ways that the water serves the community.

Connections to water and feelings of belonging are also, in zakkiyyah dumas o'neal's work, a poetic communing to be had with the city's landscape. The series, *in the open you are here* (2023), also centers around a community's relationship to the environment, specifically to water (calling to mind how Poussier conceives of the canal). Her still images of Chicago's Lake Michigan, sometimes featuring her partner's hands outstretched toward the calm water, encompass an intimacy in solitude outside the gaze of others.

Audio transcription of audio interview with artist zakkiyyah najeebah dumas o'neal recorded by Jackson Roach: “Thinking about this relationship between, Black folks and access to leisure and access to bodies of water specifically with this exhibition, thinking about intimate observations of the south side that are not typically highlighted,

that exists outside of the realm of, I would say, socioeconomic, political concerns. Although access to water and leisure, for me, I view as a socioeconomic concern I think about all of these things in relationship to Black interiority, in terms of how we access our aliveness and where we find beauty in our every day, whether it's in nature, whether it's a body of water."

For dumas-o'neal, photography represents "an intimate language of gathering and assembling information that is personal." Against the chaotic and heavy experience of being in a city, and specifically experiencing the city as someone confronted daily with the impositions of race, gender, work, and other structures acting on their lives, Lake Michigan in particular can serve as a space of universally accessible calm and leisure. Influenced by Kevin Quashie's notion of "[Black aliveness](#)," dumas-o'neal centers her everyday relationships with the built and natural environments around her, moving away from the omnipresent expectation to be grappling with our political and social realities at every moment.

Intimité/Intimacy



Image: Installation view: A photo from Tonika Lewis Johnson's *Belonging* series featuring three young Black men outside the turnstiles of a Paris metro station. Two of the men are standing, and the third is squatting. All three are looking directly into the camera. In the background, other photographs from the installation are partially visible. Courtesy of Villa Albertine.

Inherent to living in a city is the friction of our stories being inextricably always about our environment and its people. Tonika Lewis Johnson's series, *Belonging* (2023), is a continuation of a [project she began in Chicago](#) about experiencing the city as a racialized person, asking young people of color to talk about a place when they were made to feel like they didn't belong, and then photographing them in that location. Alongside the photographs, where the subjects are looking straight on at the camera, Johnson has recorded interviews where the subjects talk about the experience they had in that place. There is a unique intimacy created by the combination of a still photograph and recorded sound; our focus is entirely on the storyteller's experience, and their gaze is turned on the viewer describing situations when an oppressive gaze was imposed upon them. In extending her project to Europe (inspired, in part, by the [video collaboration](#) between A\$AP Rocky and British rapper Skepta), Johnson found a wealth of dialogue to be had across languages and cities.

Transcription of audio interview with Tonika Lewis Johnson recorded by Jackson Roach: “The commonalities that emerged were unbelievable. Specifically, one that was enlightening to me, because right before coming to Paris, I had the opportunity to go to London. And let me tell you, going from the United States, London, and France, very economically strong countries with significant history in the world I was like, wow. The Black people in each of these countries have a unique understanding of each other And it’s because we’re all from very rich countries, and so when we complain about social issues and injustices, it’s a bit different because these are the countries that other people want to migrate to, so that was a really strong connection.”

In the works of Sasha Phyers-Burgess, who came to Chicago as part of the Diane Dammeyer Fellowship in Photographic Arts and Social Issues, we see video clips and portraits taken in the Austin neighborhood of Chicago as well as in Clichy-sous-Bois, a neighborhood of Paris where she was invited to do a residency by the Ateliers Médicis. In addition to the still photography installed at BUILD and the Chicago Cultural Center, Phyers-Burgess’ fellowship culminated in a video installation on view only at the Cultural Center, where she captured intimate moments from the lives of youth affected by gun violence participating in a program to equip them with job skills. A large part of her work seeks to excavate moments of intimacy, joy, and a generally full range of emotion in a context where so often, broad strokes paint an incomplete understanding of a community. As her series moves from the training center to the insides of peoples’ homes and families, the scenes both candid and staged reveal that in every interaction, there is an intimacy to be found the longer you stay and observe a neighborhood.



Installation view: A rectangular collage of Sasha Phyers-Burgess’ work against a purple wall at BUILD Chicago in Austin. The collage includes several portraits of individuals and couples, as well as still scenes of hallways and objects like light shining on a plastic cup of water. All of the photographs are in black-and-white. Courtesy of Villa Albertine.

Transcription of audio interview with artist Sasha Phyers-Burgess recorded by Jackson Roach: “My method and way of photographing was to spend time with people. So I stayed. The fellowship itself was just one year, but I ended up staying in Chicago for three years because COVID happened in 2020. I stayed for three years and continued photographing. I continued photographing and I think what my goal was, or what my intent was, rather, was to really just be an observer in a way. The first thing that I had access to

were the landscapes, so I photographed landscapes first. And then the longer that I was in Chicago, I got to kind of go into the interior. And I felt like being able to get into the interiors of people's homes and also take photographs inside of interiors allowed me to bring across the element of people. People live here, which is really important to me. And I felt as though it was the thing that I really wanted to drill in on: that people are living their lives here."

Transcription of audio interview with artist Sasha Phyers-Burgess recorded by Jackson Roach: "I'm just interested in photography because it allows you to look longer than, you know, just seeing can provide. It allows you to go deeper if you choose to. And then I think in particular, with photographing cities in a city like Chicago, it just allows a kind of archaeological mapping that I think is important to understand the present [state] of a city, I think in order to know where you want to go, you should try your best to know where you came from."

CONCLUSION/CONCLUSION

Through the eyes of these ten photographers they build a cosmopolitan collage of different ways of seeing two cities. What their patterns reveal—whether it is invisible labor, transnational parallels of racialized experiences, or the history and communities that constantly join and change the city—is a practice of engaging with our surroundings deeply.

Transcription of audio interview with artists Marion Poussier and Sasha Phyers-Burgess recorded by Jackson Roach.

Poussier: "J'ai l'impression qu'il y a un qui se fait parce qu'on parle aussi, en tout cas dans les projets que j'ai pu voir sur Chicago, de choses qui se font un peu sur les banlieues ou les communautés un peu mises à l'écart. Après, je pense que dans les discussions qu'il va y avoir, les liens vont se créer, peut-être. [I have the impression that there is a dialogue taking place because we are all talking, at least in the projects that I have seen, about things that are being done in somewhat sidelined communities. Afterward, I think that more discussions will take place, and links will be created.]"

Phyers-Burgess: "All of our work is trying to look and give voice or light to certain areas in the world, the peripheries of Paris, or the peripheries of Chicago, or neighborhoods in Chicago. I think all of us are looking for ways to make sense of the world that we're in. You know, whether that be through parakeets, or if that be through, you know, riding the RER B I think all of us are trying to make sense of the landscape in whatever ways we, we, we can, you know?"

Reaching my destination at the end of the red line, my mind remains with the artists of *Opening Passages* and the ways of inhabiting the city that they've pushed me to consider. Anonymous riders and I ignore each other companionably, staring out the window or at our phones, saturated by a constant blur of visual stimuli. At several points in *Opening Passages*, we are encouraged to notice more of each other, the long commutes, the moods of Lake Michigan, city-dwelling wildlife, and structural designs that pattern the world around us.

Chicago Reader - July 10, 2024 - A tale of two cities by Nicky Ni

“Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris” opens a transatlantic dialogue among ten photographers.



Installation view of “Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris” at the Chicago Cultural Center, 2024
Credit: Julien Chatelin / Villa Albertine

Part of Art Design Chicago, the vibrant exhibition and event series that celebrates the city’s flourishing art and design scene, “Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris” is a citywide photographic exhibition in which photographers from these two sister cities engage in transatlantic dialogues that revolve around issues such as gentrification, migrant segregation, and lived experiences of metropolitan residents. The exhibition’s primary site is at the Chicago Cultural Center in the Loop. Satellite exhibits extend to three neighborhoods—Woodlawn at Experimental Station, and now-closed locations in Edgewater at 6018 | North and Austin at BUILD Chicago—and each host selects works that resonate with its location.

“Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris”
Through 7/27: outdoors, Experimental Station, 6100 S. Blackstone, experimentalstation.org, free;
Through 8/25: Mon–Sun 10 AM–5 PM, Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington, free

Works by ten photographers—five from each city—are featured in these exhibitions. Chicago-based Jonathan Michael Castillo, whose focus is on Americana, presents select pieces from his series “Immigrant Owned.” The photos portray interiors of restaurants, salons, flower shops, currency exchanges, and tailors, frequently with owners posing at the center. Meticulously lit, subjects are motionless and contemplative, like statues. The maximalist portraits are complemented by photographs that show the neglected, quiet corners of their shops and off-hour spaces that still brim with labor and care.

Castillo's work forms an intriguing dialogue with that of Tonika Lewis Johnson, another Chicago-based photographer who has expanded her "Belonging" project across the pond thanks to a residency she participated in at Ateliers Médicis in Clichy-sous-Bois, a suburb of Paris.

Producing in situ portraits where the subjects of the series, Black and Brown teens, pose on stoops, at bus stops, in playgrounds, and similarly common Chicago locations, Johnson's photographs are annotated with a QR code that directs viewers to a recorded conversation with the subjects. These include accounts of situations where the interviewees felt like they didn't belong in their environment as much as they should.

In one photograph, Lauren, shown standing in an aisle of a supermarket, talks about how her family was racially profiled by a security guard, though the guard himself was African American as well, when they entered the West Loop's Asian grocery store H-Mart. In another story, Colette, born in Orléans, France, speaks about the lack of transparent racial discourse in French society and how this collective racism under the guise of classism trickles down to aspects of life that she has to internalize on a daily basis. These conversations, unsettling in their casual and matter-of-fact delivery, highlight different modes of racism against African diasporic communities in the two countries—and the alarming degree of social normalization within which racism operates.



Installation view of works by Sasha Phylars-Burgess at "Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris" at the Chicago Cultural Center, 2024
Credit: Julien Chatelin / Villa Albertine

This feeling of discomfort echoes in other works that use collage as a metaphor for fragmented or truncated experiences. In "Territoire-Travail" ("Territory-Work"), Paris-based Colombian artist Gilberto Güiza-Rojas overlays vibrant images of manual-labor workers midtask on reduced-saturation photos of built environments to create large installations that engulf the viewer. At the Chicago Cultural Center, these photos are adjusted so that lines of architectural features in both images are aligned or superimposed, creating an illusion that the bottom image is an extended space to the top. They feature workers who undergo training at the French National Agency for Adult Vocational Training, with the subjects' faces either truncated by the picture frame or facing away from the camera. These staged photos exemplify an astute analogy to the

working class's social invisibility and their uncertainty about the outcomes that these trainings may promise.

Chicago-based, Polish American photographer Marzena Abrahamik uses collage to piece together images and symbols that signify Polish identities and traditions. In her two wall-based collages beneath plexiglass cases at the Cultural Center, clippings of images such as a white-tailed eagle and poppies—the national symbol and national flower of Poland, respectively—are staggered and layered on top of thumbnail pictures from the photographer's "Return" series. Like nebulae of memories, the images look as though they are free-floating, casting shallow shadows on the wall. "Return" is a body of portraits that document Polish Americans who, for one reason or another, decide to return to their home country after spending years in the United States.

Another tactic shared by some members in this show is abstracting nature or capturing urban environments devoid of human presence to scavenge for a kind of strange familiarity—or a familiar strangeness—that encapsulates city dwellers. Eeriness is balanced with serenity in the series by Lyon-based night photographer Karim Kal, in photos in which the camera's flash exposes what look like features that belong to city alleys: susurrant weeds, obscure back porches and trails, and rear walls. The bone-white brightness of the myopic foreground immediately snaps your attention into a vast background of pitch black. The alienating effect is nightmarish, almost ghostly.



Installation view of works by Karim Kal at "Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris" at the Chicago Cultural Center, 2024
Credit: Julien Chatelin / Villa Albertine

Elsewhere, traces of rose-ringed parakeets are the main subjects of Paris- and Yerevan-based photographer Rebecca Topakian's work in the exhibitions. A collection of plumes is arranged idiosyncratically by size and color. What complements the wall-based specimens are silk banners—they hang up high from the ceiling, printed with blurry Instax photographs of these airborne travelers in flight between spatters of leaves. Each banner has a concise sentence: "These species are capable of speaking French, so they are French"; "It's not their fault, but it's not their environment"; "We must act before they become too numerous." Almost like slogans, they can be read as double entendres that satirize the bureaucratic disdain against immigration.

Nature is also a cruel witness of human atrocities. The photographs from Chicago-based visual artist zakkiyyah najeebah dumas-o’neal’s sublime series “in the open you are here” build upon the idea of how water is central to both Black history and experiences. In these photos, water is a feature of Black spiritual practices, a tool used to commit acts of violence and bloodshed, and a place for liberation and resistance. On the exterior wall of Experimental Station, an enlarged vinyl diptych of the lake—abstracted to a color-field duet against a white background—sticks directly to the red brick wall; the pebbly surface of the wall adds a wrought texture to the gradient that flows from azure to indigo, like a foggy lake at the blue hour. At the Cultural Center, framed photographs are both on the wall and laid flat on low platforms. In one photograph, the artist superimposes a picture of a pair of open arms over a wrinkled aquatic surface, as though someone was asking for an embrace of reconciliation with the water—the treacherous water that devours all but forgets none.

“Opening Passages” opens doors to myriad stories hidden behind images like this. Sometimes you do need a passage that becomes a journey through which to feel the weight of an image.

Wttw - July 24, 2024 - Photo Exhibition Explores Social Dynamics in Chicago and Paris Through the Cities’ Residents by Angel Idowu



“Opening Passages” is on display at the Chicago Cultural Center and other locations in the city. (Credit: Julien Chatelin)

As the Paris Olympics prepares to kick off on Friday, Chicagoans can explore the connections and contrasts between their city and the French capital in a multi-venue art exhibition.

“Opening Passages” explores the social dynamics of the two cities, and their connection to public spaces. With installations at various points in the spring and summer at the Chicago Cultural Center and community sites in Edgewater, Austin and Woodlawn, photographers from both Chicago and Paris capture the cities’ similarities and differences in the exhibition presented by Art Design Chicago and organized by Villa Albertine.

Two South Side-based artists, zakkiyyah najeebah dumas-o'neal and Tonika Lewis Johnson, are among the featured artists. Their photographs hang contrasted to work of the Paris transit system by Assia Labbas.

For Lewis Johnson, her focus was aimed at the experience teenagers of color face in spaces where they feel like they don't belong. She evolved the concept into a series titled "Belonging" that further explores the dialogue around racial divisions in urban landscapes.

Labbas' work follows the daily commuters on the line of a train that runs from Paris to the suburbs. With images taken through the windows of the train, Labbas captures what was described as "often striking" socio-economic disparities as the train traveled from affluent to less affluent neighborhoods. Her photos came to fruition after deciding to ride the train from one end to the other.

"I wanted to do something about meeting the people from the north and the south, because I feel like they don't meet," Labbas said.

"What's interesting is the train goes through a southern region, where it's quite wealthy," Labbas said. "There's so much greenery and it was really beautiful. Then you have Paris and all its touristy parts. And then I took the train to go north and it was ugly. Very gray, lots of factories. Not a wealthy area. It's not that beautiful, it's so gloomy."

That contrast sparked an idea.

"To change the image that we see through the window," Labbas said. "I loved how the form of the winds reminded me of the slides of a film. When you look at a film it's very slow. And that was the idea, of slowing down the train and changing the images that we see through the windows."

Their group work is currently on display in an outdoor installation at the Experimental Station, 6100 S. Blackstone Ave.

"Before the project, I had never really thought about a connection between Chicago and Paris," dumas-o'neal said.

"I think objectively people might not think there is a similarity between the two, but one thing I'm starting to notice is we all explore this idea of belonging. Not just where we belong within our work, but how we utilize photography to highlight spaces of belonging," dumas-o'neal said.

Their work in the exhibition was focused on advancing the concept of Black autonomy and self-determination through pictures that capture bodies of water juxtaposed with generational family photos.

"What I've experienced with the shoreline and water in Chicago and kind of thinking through sort of how bodies of water sort of create this interconnectedness across the diaspora, whether you're Black in America, or maybe you're African and in France, or you're Senegalese or Ghanaian and you're from Benin," dumas-o'neal continues. "I guess I sort of have thought about the project in that way."

When the show first opened this summer, the artists were able to gather in person and see the work of their peers and meet one another.

It was during that visit that Labbas was able to relate to the interconnectedness of the exhibition dumas-o'neal speaks on.

“When I saw Tonika’s work, I was very surprised,” Labbas said. “I want to say shocked, because the fact that we don’t know each other, but we kind of have the same ideas, even if our work is kind of different.”

Those shared ideas made sense after speaking with the participating artists.

“You start to realize that a lot of us are dealing with a lot of the same issues, questions and concerns. It’s really political,” dumas-o'neal said. “But to a certain degree, I also find it to be very poetic and human and universal.”

“Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris” is open at the [Experimental Station through July 27](#) and at the [Chicago Cultural Center’s Exhibit Hall](#) on the fourth floor through Aug. 25.

Funding for WTTW’s arts coverage as part of [Art Design Chicago, a citywide collaboration highlighting the city’s artistic heritage and creative communities](#), is provided in part by the Terra Foundation for American Art.

Institutions

6018North - Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris



May 4, 2024 – June 15, 2024

Open Hours: Saturdays, May 11 to June 15, from 1-5 PM, 6018 N Kenmore Ave, Chicago
Healing and Closing Reception: Breaking Free, Releasing What Was & Moving Onward with Rhonda Wheatley: Saturday, June 15 at 5 PM – [RSVP](#)

This exhibition is part of a multi-site photographic project featuring recent series by ten French and American artists who engage with the historical and social dynamics at work in Chicago and Paris. The photographs, whether documentary or poetic, allow each artist to reflect with accuracy and subtlety the issues and identities specific to each city, as well as their differences, similarities, and the ongoing transformations.



Bus shelter in Edgewater with images by Jonathon Michael Castillo

The [Chicago Cultural Center](#) hosts the main exhibition, featuring the work of all ten photographers. The three other venues [BUILD Chicago](#), [Experimental Station](#), and 6018North exhibit a subset of the artists whose work resonates particularly with the neighborhoods in which these institutions are located and the communities they serve. Related events include screenings, workshops, and conversations.

Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris is part of Art Design Chicago, a citywide collaboration initiated by the Terra Foundation for American Art that highlights the city's artistic heritage and creative communities.

At 6018|North, the works of five of the ten photographers will be exhibited, exploring notions of frontier, immigration, and diasporic identity.

Jonathan Michael Castillo and **Gilberto Güiza-Rojas** focus on the notion of work, **Rebecca Topakian** and **Marion Poussier** question the border or margin, and **Marzena Abrahamik** takes an interest in the Polish community in Chicago. Each of them, in their own way, highlights multiple, fragmented, or superimposed life trajectories. These works find a particular echo in the Edgewater neighborhood, which is characterized by the cohabitation of communities of very diverse origins.



MARZENA ABRAHAMIK – Return

Born in 1978 in Tarnów, Poland; lives and works in Chicago.

Return is a visual research project that explores the ways in which the Polish diasporic identity continues to re-imagine itself and negotiates the racial landscape of the United States. Abrahamik's images use symbols and icons associated with Polish life and traditions, such as red poppies, swans, and portraits of the Catholic Pope, to delve into the complex processes of cultural translation, where meanings are simultaneously stable and adaptable.



JONATHAN MICHAEL CASTILLO - Immigrant Owned

Born in 1982, lives and works in Chicago.

Throughout Chicago's history, immigrants from all over the world have been a central part of the city's social, cultural, and economic landscape. Since 2017, Jonathan Michael Castillo has been traversing Chicago and its suburbs, photographing the interiors of immigrant-owned shops and the people who run them. In recent years, Chicago's status as a "sanctuary city" has made it a target for political attacks on the national stage. Castillo's sensitive images counter these anti-immigrant narratives, presenting a dignified, multi-dimensional vision of immigrant labor in Chicago.



GILBERTO GÜIZA-ROJAS - Territoire-Travail

Born 1983 in Bogota, lives and works in the Greater Paris area.

The *Territoire-Travail* (Territory-Work) series examines the process of professional training for refugees in the Paris region. The photographic montages superimpose the original professions

with those being learned, highlighting the immense work of adaptation necessary for those who go into exile to continue their life, in another country and another language.



MARION POUSSIER - *On est là*

Born in 1980 in Rennes, France; lives and works in Paris.

The various redevelopment programs of the banks of the Saint-Denis Canal in Paris have made this changing territory a difficult space to inhabit. However, in these spaces undergoing a process rationalization process, certain forms of life resist and oppose the uses to come. Bodies assert themselves and gestures persist, like a claim to ownership of the place. The title of the series *On est là* refers to the notion of "being there" that the artist wishes to capture.



REBECCA TOPAKIAN - (n = 6 - 9)

Born in 1989 in Vincennes, lives and works between Yerevan, Armenia, and Paris

Halfway between a scientific undertaking and a poetic reverie, Rebecca Topakian's series (n=6-9) explores the Greater Paris area through exotic birds: the rose-ringed parakeets who escaped from Orly airport in 1974 and have multiplied to over eight thousand. Working with ethologists, the artist captures their flight using infrared photography and reproduces the images on large

silk panels. On each of them, she prints phrases taken from various social networks, revealing how differences are perceived and the social inequalities this generates.

Read more about each artist, and explore the schedule of special events, here: [Opening Passages](#).

Opening Passages: Artists Respond to Chicago and Paris is organized by Villa Albertine in Chicago, curated by Carl Fuldner in association with Pascal Beausse from the Centre national des arts plastiques and Clément Postec from the Ateliers Médicis. It is supported by the Terra Foundation for the American Arts, Albertine Foundation chapter in Chicago, the Department of Cultural Affairs of the City of Chicago, the Institut Français, the Alliance française de Chicago and the France Chicago Center at the University of Chicago.

Alliance française de Chicago - Opening Passages : Chicago and Paris.

A discussion with French photographers Assia Labbas and Rebecca Topakian, and American photographer Sasha Phyers-Burgess

Tuesday, May 7 • 6:30 p.m.

Free Admission

On Site • Enter via 54 W. Chicago Ave

In English

Moderated by Carl Fuldner and Pascal Beausse.

Discover the work of 3 artists as part of [Opening Passages : Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris](#), a multi-site photographic exhibition presenting recent works by ten artists staging a cross-cultural reflection on contemporary life in two global cities, Paris and Chicago. While these two sister cities are currently going through the same historical process of redefining their urban plans, the visions these artists offer to us, whether documentary or poetic, reflect the issues and identities specific to each territory, their differences, their similarities and the transformations at work.

Carl Fuldner

Curator of the Exhibition Opening Passages

Carl Fuldner is an art historian and curator whose practice engages with the history of photography, environmental toxicology, and the intersections of art and natural history. Fuldner earned a PhD in Art History from the University of Chicago in 2018. He has taught art history and museum studies courses at the Rhode Island School of Design and Western Colorado University. He also has over fifteen years of experience working for museums and cultural institutions, including the Art Institute of Chicago, Yale University Art Gallery, Smart Museum of Art, Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Wisconsin Historical Society, and Villa Albertine. He is a co-editor of *The Art Institute of Chicago Field Guide to Photography and Media* (2023).

Pascal Beausse

Associate Curator of the Exhibition Opening Passages

Pascal Beausse is Head of the photography collection at the Centre national des arts plastiques (Paris). With Anna Labouze, Keimis Henni and Clément Postec, he curated the *Regards du Grand Paris* exhibition in 2022, presenting the works of 38 photographers who were laureates of the eponymous photographic commission launched in 2016, with the aim of building up, year after year, a corpus of images and authors' views on the evolution of the Greater Paris.

Assia Labbas

The artist followed regular commuters on the B line of the RER (high-speed train service linking Paris to the suburbs), examining the impact of these images as representative of the area, Seine-Saint-Denis. *RER B-ANLIEUES, 2022* When looking at these photographs, the artist reveals - through the windows of the train - unexpected perspectives on the landscape of the area and those living there.

Rebecca Topakian

Halfway between a scientific undertaking and a poetic reverie, Rebecca Topakian's series (*n=6-9*) explores the Greater Paris area through exotic birds: the rose-ringed parakeets escaped from Orly airport in 1974, they have multiplied to over eight thousand. With ethologists, the artist captures their flight using infrared photography. Accompanying sentences on silk prints from various social networks reveal social inequalities in the face of differences.

Sasha Phyers-Burgess

Sasha Phyers-Burgess, a Brooklyn native raised in Pennsylvania to Trinidadian parents, is a skilled photographer with a BA from Bard College and an MFA from Cornell University. She's recognized as an emerging voice in contemporary photography, her work showcasing series blending documentary and fine art, exploring themes of diaspora, family, place, and social phenomena. In 2023, she undertook an artist residency in Paris as part of the Clichycago program at Ateliers Médicis. She received the Guggenheim Fellowship Award and the Diane Dammeyer Award for her work in Austin.

This program is possible thanks to the support of Villa Albertine Chicago

[Opening Passages : Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris](#) is part of [Art Design Chicago](#), a citywide collaboration initiated by the Terra Foundation for American Art that highlights the city's artistic heritage and creative communities.

[Ambassade de France aux Etats-Unis - Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris](#)

From May 4 to August 25, explore Villa Albertine’s new multi-site exhibition featuring installations in non-traditional venues and community spaces across Chicago.

Curator: Carl Fuldner

Associate curators: Pascal Beausse (Cnap) and Clément Postec (Ateliers Médicis)

Opening Passages is a photographic exhibition bringing together the perspectives of ten emerging French and American artists whose works explore the dynamic social landscapes of Chicago and Paris. The unique approaches of the photographers highlight the historic processes of urban redefinition taking place in both cities with subtlety and accuracy.

The exhibition offers reflections on urban divisions, cultural identity, immigrant experiences, waterfronts and green spaces, and the built environment, centering stories from the margins and forming a visual collage of life within these two global cities.

In addition to the main exhibition at the Chicago Cultural Center, three other venues and community spaces around the city—6018|North, BUILD Chicago, and Experimental Station—host smaller installations, featuring additional works by the photographers selected for their resonance with the neighborhoods in which these institutions are located.

Additional events aim to foster greater transatlantic dialogues among the artists and fruitful exchanges with the public.



Opening Passages is part of Art Design Chicago, a citywide collaboration initiated by the Terra Foundation that highlights the city’s artistic heritage and creative communities and Villa Albertine’s City/Cité program that seeks to foster a multidisciplinary transatlantic conversation on urban issues. Pairing metropolitan areas from both countries, it brings together diverse stakeholders, including researchers, artists, architects, journalists, urban planners, community activists, culture professionals, and political leaders.

All works featured in this exhibition were supported through one of several artistic grants. Gilberto Güiza-Rojas, Karim Kal, Assia Labbas, Marion Poussier, and Rebecca Topakian were laureates of a photographic commission Regards du Grand Paris, launched in 2016 by the French Ministry of Culture and managed by the Ateliers Médicis, in collaboration with the Centre national des arts plastiques (Cnap). Marzena Abrahamik, Jonathan Michael Castillo and zakkiyyah najeebah dumas-o’neal each received creative grants as part of “Chicagoland Scene,” an open call initiated by Villa Albertine. Thanks to the Ateliers Médicis, Sasha Phylars-Burgess was awarded a residency in Clichy-sous-Bois/Monfermeil at Ateliers Médicis in 2022, and Tonika Lewis Johnson became the first American recipient of Regards du Grand Paris in 2023.

Since 2021, the Paris-Chicago dialogue has been flourishing under the umbrella of Clichycago: a platform for community-based cultural exchange and artistic experimentation, with the support of the Ateliers Médicis in Clichy-sous-Bois / Montfermeil (France) and Villa Albertine in Chicago.

WHERE

Chicago | Multiple locations

WHEN

May 4 - August 25, 2024

[MORE INFORMATION](#)

[Art Design Chicago - Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris – Chicago Cultural Center](#)



On est là. Wanderson, Aubervilliers, 2021 © Marion Poussier.

This multi-site photographic exhibition presents recent works by ten artists who engage with the dynamic social landscapes of Chicago or Paris, staging a cross-cultural reflection on contemporary life in two global cities. The artists presented are Chicago-based artists Marzena Abrahamik, Jonathan Michael Castillo, zakkiyyah najeebah dumas o’neal, Tonika Johnson and Sasha Phyers-Burgess, and Greater Paris-based Gilberto Güiza-Rojas, Karim Kal, Assia Labbas, Marion Poussier, and Rebecca Topakian.

The unique approaches of the photographers consider the historic processes of urban redefinition taking place in both cities. Their photography, whether documentary or poetic, enables each artist to reflect with accuracy and subtlety the issues and identities specific to each city, as well as their differences, similarities, and the transformations at work. Through a series of events organized in the various exhibition venues in the presence of the photographers, the exhibition organizers aim to ensure a coherent dialogue between the works and their environment, to create the conditions for a transatlantic conversation among the artists, and to catalyze a fruitful exchange with the public.

The Chicago Cultural Center hosts the main exhibition, featuring the work of all ten photographers. Three other venues—[BUILD Chicago](#), [Experimental Station](#), and [6018North](#)—exhibit a subset of the artists whose work resonates particularly with the neighborhoods in which these institutions are located and the communities they serve. Related events include screenings, workshops and conversations.

[City of Chicago - Chicago Cultural Center Announces New Exhibitions Featuring Artist Victoria Martinez; 10 Chicago- and Paris-based Photographers – and Images of Trans, Queer, and Lesbian Grassroots Organizing \(extract\)](#)

February 14, 2024

Other Spring/Summer Programming Includes Music, Dance, Film, Tours, Talks + Shopping

CHICAGO – The City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) and its partners are pleased to offer free arts programming throughout the historic Chicago Cultural Center this spring and summer. New exhibitions include ***Victoria Martinez: Braiding Histories***, opening April 6; ***Images on which to build, 1970s–1990s***, opening April 20; and ***Opening Passages: Artists Respond to Chicago and Paris***, opening May 4, 2024.

Continuing art exhibitions include A Long Walk Home’s ***Freedom Square: The Black Girlhood Altar***, through March 10; ***Surviving the Long Wars: Transformative Threads***, through December 8, 2024; and ***Great Ideas of Humanity: One of a Series*** presented with the Design Museum of Chicago.

Additional highlights include a **Spring Open House** on April 11 from 4–8pm; a free **“Under the Dome” concert** on April 18 featuring **Rudy De Anda**; **Dance Residency open studios** on more than a dozen dates; film industry programs and screenings; tours; talks; shopping at the Buddy store; and more.

Completed in 1897 as Chicago’s first central library, the Chicago Cultural Center serves as a cultural hub for Chicagoans and visitors year-round with free arts programming, breathtaking architecture, and tours. Visit [ChicagoCulturalCenter.org](#) and follow on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#) for the latest events and updates.

(..)

Opening Passages: Artists Respond to Chicago and Paris

Part of Art Design Chicago
Exhibit Hall, 4th Floor North
May 4 – August 25, 2024

Opening Passages brings together ten photographic commissions by French and American artists that survey the dynamic social landscapes of Chicago and Paris. The artists presented are Chicago-based artists Marzena Abrahamik, Jonathan Michael Castillo, zakkiyyah najeebah dumas o'neal, Tonika Johnson and Sasha Phyers-Burgess, and Paris-based Gilberto Guiza-Rojas, Karim Kal, Assia Labbas, Marion Poussier, and Rebecca Topakian.

This multi-venue exhibition also features site-specific installations in non-traditional venues and community spaces spread across the city, including Experimental Station (Hyde Park), BUILD Chicago (Austin), 6018North (Edgewater), and The Salt Shed (Goose Island). These various activations throughout the city feature work that directly resonates with the neighborhoods where the venues are situated and speak to the socio-cultural themes that structure the overall exhibition, which reflects on urban divisions, cultural identity, immigrant experiences, waterfronts and green spaces, and the built environment. The exhibition centers stories from the margins, forming a visual collage of life within these two global cities.

Opening Passages: Artists Respond to Chicago and Paris is part of Art Design Chicago. It is organized by Villa Albertine in Chicago, curated by Carl Fuldner in association with Pascal Beausse from the Centre national des arts plastiques and Clément Postec from the Ateliers Médicis. It is supported by the Terra Foundation for the American Arts, Albertine Foundation chapter in Chicago, the Department of Cultural Affairs of the City of Chicago, the Institut Français, the Alliance française de Chicago and the France Chicago Center at the University of Chicago.

Related Programs:

- **Gallery Talk**
Exhibit Hall, 4th Floor North
Wednesday, May 8, 12-1 pm

[Experimental Station - Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris](#)

Saturday, May 4, 2024 6:00 PM - Saturday, July 27, 2024 7:00 PM

Experimental Station
6100 South Blackstone
Avenue Chicago, IL, 60637
United States



Experimental Station is pleased to partner with [Villa Albertine](#) to host one of the sites for a photography installation from May 4 to July 27.

Stop by [Experimental Station](#) on 61st Street and Blackstone Ave. to view the exhibition showcasing ten photographers—five American and five French—whose work explores the dynamic social landscapes of Chicago and Paris. The unique perspectives of the 10 participating photographers, whether documentary or poetic, weave a new understanding of the issues and identities specific to each metropolis.

Visit the [Villa Albertine](#) website to learn more about the exhibits.

[Centre national des arts plastiques \(Cnap\) - Exposition Opening Passages : Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris](#)



zakkiyyah najeebah dumas o'neal, entry #7. 35mm film scans on Canson

La **Villa Albertine**, en partenariat avec le **Cnap** et les **Ateliers Médicis**, présente l'exposition photographique *Opening Passages : Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris*, du 4 mai au 6 octobre 2024, dans quatre quartiers différents de Chicago.

Cette exposition présente le travail de **Marzena Abrahamik, Jonathan Michael Castillo, zakkiyyah najeebah dumas o'neal, Tonika Johnson, Sasha Phyers-Burgess, Gilberto Güiza-Rojas, Karim Kal, Assia Labbas, Marion Poussier, Rebecca Topakian**, dix artistes émergents, français et américains qui explorent les dynamiques sociales des villes de Chicago et de Paris.

Parmi les artistes sélectionnés par les commissaires Pascal Beausse, Clément Postec et Carl Fuldner, les œuvres de six d'entre eux - **Gilberto Güiza-Rojas, Tonika Johnson, Karim Kal, Assia Labbas, Marion Poussier, Rebecca Topakian** - font partie de la collection du Cnap et sont issues de la commande photographique nationale « **Regards du Grand Paris** », initiée par le ministère de la Culture, en partenariat avec les Ateliers Médicis et le Cnap.

L'exposition interroge les notions de frontière, d'identité culturelle, l'expérience de l'immigration, le rapport aux espaces publics, et aux environnements bâtis; elle s'intéresse aux marges et met en lumière quelques trajectoires individuelles au cœur de ces deux villes mondiales.

En complément de l'exposition principale présentée au [Chicago Cultural Center](#), trois autres lieux et espaces communautaires - [6018North](#), [BUILD Chicago](#) et [Experimental Station](#) - accueillent d'autres versions de celle ci, avec d'autres œuvres, sélectionnés pour leur résonance particulière avec les quartiers où ces institutions sont situées.

Des projections et conversations seront organisées notamment à l'occasion des vernissages pour favoriser le dialogue entre les artistes et créer les conditions d'un échange fructueux avec le public.

Artistes

[Marzena ABRAHAMIK](#)

[Jonathan Michael CASTILLO](#)

[zakkiyyah najeebah dumas o'neal](#)

[Tonika JOHNSON](#)

[Sasha PHYARS-BURGESS](#)

[Gilberto GÜIZA-ROJAS](#)

[Karim KAL](#)

[Assia LABBAS](#)

[Marion POUSSIER](#)

[Rebecca TOPAKIAN](#)

[Institut Français - Have a look at the exhibition "Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris" \(portfolio\)](#)

From May 4 to August 25, 2024, explore Opening Passages: Photographers Respond to Chicago and Paris, Villa Albertine's new multi-site exhibition featuring installations in non-traditional venues and community spaces across Chicago.

Curator: Carl Fuldner

Associate curators: Pascal Beausse (Cnap) - Clément Postec (Ateliers Médicis)

The exhibition is supported by the Institut français as part of the Appel à Projets Industries Culturelles et Créatives 2023 scheme.

The exhibitions *Opening Passages: Photographers respond to Chicago and Paris*, were imagined and coordinated by Axelle Moleur; curated by Carl Fuldner in collaboration with Pascal Beausse and Clément Postec at: Chicago Cultural Center; 6018 North; BUILD Chicago; Experimental Station.

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Villa
Albertine 


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