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Q&A | PAUL ARDENNE

Expedition anywhere

A new exhibition in Paris highlights a unique intersection of art and travel

BY SUPRIYA NAIR
supriya.n@livemint.com

Joanna Malinowska went on an expedition to hostile Arctic regions. Fabrice Langlade plans to install a porcelain bridge on the Mongolian steppe. Luc Mattenberger takes on the moon itself.

All three are artists who are also travellers—of a particular kind. Their work forms part of *Somewhere Else (Ailleurs)*, a new exhibition at the gallery L'Espace Culturel Louis Vuitton in Paris, which brings together works by artists from across the world in the expeditionist genre.

Expeditionism is about a particular motive to travel: It is the notion that contact with the outside world—with “somewhere else”—boosts creativity. As the curator of the show, Paul Ardenne, explains, “In order to create their work, the artist feels the pressing need to relocate...they can't do everything in their studio.”

Journeys and destinations are among art's perennial concerns. But expeditionism is a thoroughly modern investigation into the philosophy of why we move away—sometimes in search of adventure, sometimes for self-discovery, and sometimes, as with the Dutch conceptual artist Bas Jan Ader, who lost his life in 1975 trying to cross the Atlantic in a pocket cruiser, in search of a miracle.

In an email interview, Paul Ardenne speaks about the ways in which art and travel interact in *Somewhere Else*. Edited excerpts:

How is expeditionism different from other artistic concepts of journeys and travel?

Nowadays, an ever-growing number of artists select “somewhere else” as the setting for their creative endeavours. They set off, travel back and forth, create or install the work of art outside of its traditional place of production, the studio, or its exhibition space, the gallery.

The “expeditionist” artist does not initially establish their visual message on a precise point of land. They are more concerned with moving about or wandering; they sculpt their creation while engaging in physical nomadism

and cultural roaming. It seems to suggest the idea of muscular, romantic travel: defining the self through disorientation as much as through location. Yes and no. The “expeditionist” artist usually knows where they are going and why they are going there, even if changing the place of creation changes the creation itself. Travel means encountering new spaces, meeting other humans, and is an opportunity to redefine your own bearings. You thus represent your own world from another perspective. In this case, the confrontation with the “other” space is decisive. If there is a sense of disorientation, it is less due to the physical shift than because of the mental shift.

The idea that authentic art can only blossom “somewhere else” seems a little like a Eurocentric notion. Would you agree?

No, not at all. It is true that the effect of “somewhere else” in art was initially exploited by Western—mostly European—artists. This



Elsewhere: (above) Fabrice Langlade's *Un pont en porcelaine en Mongolie*; and Paul Gauguin's *La Fuite*.



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the work of the Chilean artist Fernando Prats. Participatory art too in the style of (French artist) Yann Dumoget, whose artistic process consisted in touring the world for two years, bringing news from one person to the next, as decided by the people he met by chance. In the Far East, T'ia Calli Borlase creates sculptures made of trimmings or lingerie, exhibits them

surreptitiously in temples and then photographs them: sculpture, performance and photography, all in one. There is nothing exclusive about the use of media, whatever they are. (New York-based Greek artist) Andreas Angelidakis, for example, designs virtual landscapes using a computer and offers us the image of locations that are constantly being dug up and extended through digital animation, in which we lose ourselves.

Somewhere Else (Ailleurs) is on display at L'Espace Culturel Louis Vuitton, Paris, till 8 May.

is no longer the case. Internationalization has levelled geographical hierarchies, and the Internet has contributed to the circulation of ideas and forms without any physical barriers. The result is an expanded area where everyone has their rightful place wherever they are. **What inspired L'Espace Culturel Louis Vuitton to pick this theme?** The Espace Culturel Louis Vuitton gives precedence to themes linked to travel, adventure and migration. For genetic reasons, as its director Marie-Ange Moulounguet would remind you: Vuitton's DNA lies in the first travel items, that is,

bags and suitcases, starting with the now legendary famous “trunk” designed by Louis Vuitton, synonymous with the idea of distant or adventurous travel. *Somewhere Else* reinforces this idea in its own way by demonstrating that, in the era of globalization, human migrations are not just for tourist reasons or correlated to misery, as we often hear, but that they are also aesthetic. **What are some of the media visitors experience in the show?**

Video, of course, in that it allows you to make recordings. But also painting, as you can see in