

The films of Guillaume Dustan (2000-2004)

13 March – 16 May 2021

*"My films are made according to the Warholian dogma, filmed on DV with a very nice Sony camera which produces a very strange image, no credits, with live sound and no editing. They're edited as they're filmed."*¹

Writer and publisher Guillaume Dustan published eight books between 1996 and 2004. They came out by period, developing towards an increasingly free style including transcription of experiences and speech. He used this protocol to construct and deconstruct his political and philosophical thought, honing and repeating it. He tried out ever more possibilities of real-time writing through interview, commentary, speech and the decomposition of language. His films are part of this continuity.

"I'm totally in love with TRISTAN – named after Tristan Shandy [sic], an English hero from a novel. His mother's a literary translator. What about that? Pretty good huh! Dearest diary, I'm in love. I'm not on my own anymore."

In the noughties and until his death in 2005, Dustan was in love with Tristan. At this time, he lived at his own place or at friends' places in Paris and at Tristan's in Geneva and then in Zurich.

He made his films over this period. In the first, *Nous (love no end)* (2000), he explains right off how he's going to use the camera: someone gives him the mini-DV and he tells us, "It only records when I press down". Then he puts it down and dances naked in front of it.

For Dustan the camera's active. It's a sensor that allows him to show things you don't see if you don't look at them. He explains to Tristan, "This film is really hyperactive, because when I watched what I'd just filmed, I noticed that I had this horrible spot under my arm!" In the same way, he never isolates sex from life in his films, but nor does he highlight it: he shows sexuality in its most everyday forms, so that it doesn't become the subject of pornographic consumption but rather a tool for emancipation to "give importance to things that we don't talk about but which are nevertheless the very essence of the definition of self".

Finally, for him, video recording was to become a very effective way of reappropriating his own image and words, which were deformed by the TV screen. He had become a media figure thanks to his political positions at the time of the AIDS crisis² and exposure of what was shown as his eccentricity. He was to say that TV killed him. The self-definition and self-representation that were so dear to him became, in his films, a veritable production tool.

This exhibition is the third public presentation of Guillaume Dustan's films, after a first retrospective in Paris in 2019 – at the time of the restoration of the films -, and a programme of ten films in Marseille in 2020. Following on from this and in conjunction with the publication of the second volume of the complete works³, prepared and annotated by Thomas Clerc for P.O.L, the exhibition brings together the 13 films that feature in the filmography⁴, the eight books written by Guillaume Dustan and, for the first time together, the collection of books published in the *Le Rayon* collection, the first LGBTQ collection to appear in France, created and headed up by Guillaume Dustan between 1999 and 2003.

¹ Guillaume Dustan, *Premier essai*, Flammarion, 2005

² Guillaume Dustan clashed with Act Up-Paris, particularly Didier Lestrade, its co-founder, on positions relating to barebacking, the practice of the sexual act without using a condom. On this, read 'Mon épidémie' by Lili Reynaud Dewar (2015), available for consultation at the exhibition in the booklet *Les films d'entretien*, p.21.

³ Guillaume Dustan, *Oeuvres II (Nicolas Pages - Génie divin - LXiR)*, édition prepared and annotated and with a foreword by Thomas Clerc, P.O.L, 2021.

⁴ Guillaume Dustan published a filmography he drew up himself in his last book, *Premier essai*, Flammarion, 2005, p.151, which is available at the exhibition. Four of the films in this filmography cannot be shown due to image rights issues. We give them an existence in the exhibition in other ways, in the booklet, *Le Cycle de Tristan*, p.40.

A selection of films is screened and the full filmography can be viewed at viewing stations, according to the four cycles of films defined by Dustan himself in his last book *Premier Essai*⁵:

- *Three Apartment Films*: autobiopornography, inside the ghetto⁶;
- *The Series of Tristan*: his love story with Tristan over four years: “I’m making this film to find out if I still love you”;
- *The Interview Films*: a conference on “literature and sexuality” in Valencia (and a failed trip to Ibiza), an interview on “the left” with a journalist and a deconstruction of the history of literature with the publisher Pierre Dulieu;
- *The Community*: the community culture, queer squats in London and Zurich, a final performance in Paris.

Each series is accompanied by a booklet published specially on the occasion of this exhibition, each of which groups together a corpus of writing by Dustan, along with critical texts, transcriptions of interviews and films and extracts of books from the *Le Rayon* collection. These publications help us to gain a better understanding of the films and bear witness to Dustan’s project: “to create a sort of energy bubble with a... negentropic dynamic that attracts. [...] I do stuff. I write books. I’ve created an editorial collection. I shape pretty brilliant people and I take myself for Warhol – creating a Factory ...”⁷.

This community enterprise includes both an emancipatory dimension, and a significant one of empowerment. Ahmed Aderbache⁸, a Franco-Spanish researcher, is among those who relate the enterprise. He tells us that it was Dustan who enabled him to maintain a link with France, as the “son of an immigrant and a gay man of 24 in the 1990s, when your first name or your surname was a marker that meant that at university you’d be asked, “Where are you from?” The first time I saw Dustan, he arranged to meet me in a café and I explained to him why I wanted to write an academic article on his work. He looked at me as if to say, “Why the fuss?” He suggested I walk with him and as I didn’t have anything to do, we carried on talking literature all afternoon while folding his underpants, as he had to pick up his washing at the launderette. (...) In meeting him I met someone who listened to me and opened the way to meeting people like Sam Bourcier and Paul B. Preciado.”⁹

The Dustan method consists in creating on the margin of things rather than at the centre, in new places in which he could reappropriate knowledge and experiences outside institutions¹⁰, in thinking up ways of living and economies that detach themselves from the system. “What Dustan does to us”¹¹: because the system is incapable of including minorities of gender, class and race, of showing everything (including sex, “which is life” all the same) or of providing for the needs of everyone (the project behind the *Le Rayon* collection is part of this¹²).

In Zurich once again in *Ratés* (2003), after the *Le Rayon* collection had ceased to be published, he escapes once again to Tristan’s to find “some calm”. This is his last film but one, shot on the road on the way back from Switzerland to France, to Douai where Dustan has once again taken up a post in public service. In the car, it is hard to make out the voices. Lampposts and the headlights of trucks are filmed through the windscreen. A few months later, in *montre t lèvres* (2004), his testamentary film, all that’s left are shadows, feet and halos of light.

“I don’t give a fuck about homosexuality, sex, clubbing, techno, drugs, people, the instant, even pleasure itself. All these things are just ways of reaching enlightenment.”¹³

⁵ *Premier essai* (Op. cit.)

⁶ The ghetto is a term Guillaume Dustan uses in his books to talk about the gay ghetto, the Marais in Paris.

On this, read the passages from pages 6 to 22 in the booklet *Trois films d'appartement* that is available for consultation at the exhibition.

⁷ Extract from the G.D. film, *Nietzsche*, 2002, 62 min, that can be viewed at the ‘Interview Films’ viewing station and on a separate screen at the exhibition.

⁸ Ahmed Aderbache was also the first translator of Guillaume Dustan’s work with the Spanish edition of *Dans ma chambre, En mi cuarto*, Reservoir Books.

⁹ Transcription of an extract of the contribution by Ahmed Aderbache ‘Spaces like areas of freedom in the works *Dans ma chambre* and *Je sors ce soir*’ to the study day “I have always been for every being”: Guillaume Dustan or the infinity of possibles’, organised by Raffaël Enault, Université Paris-Diderot, 28 May 2019

¹⁰ We should not forget that Dustan was a graduate from the prestigious French government administration ‘grande école’, ENA, and a magistrate, and took a sabbatical from public administration from 1996, to write, publish, go out to clubs, do drugs and have sex.

¹¹ We, Pascaline, Julien and Olga, use this phrase to express the way in which Guillaume Dustan’s œuvre works on his readers and spectators. It is also the title of a text that accompanied the cycle, *Dix films de Guillaume Dustan* that were screened in Marseille in 2020, and is available for consultation at the exhibition and on the Vidéodrome site at the following link: <https://www.videodrome2.fr/dix-films-de-guillaume-dustan/>.

¹² See the interview ‘Le Rayon’ with Françoise Vigna at the exhibition on the *Le Rayon* table; and Guillaume Dustan, ‘Projet de collection à l’attention des éditions Balland’, extract from *Nicolas Pages*, Balland, coll. *Le Rayon*, 1999, available for consultation at the exhibition in the booklet *La communauté*.

¹³ Guillaume Dustan, *Génie Divin*, Balland, coll. *Le Rayon*, 2001, available at the exhibition.

Guillaume Dustan (1965-2005)

Biblio-filmography

1996	<i>Dans ma chambre</i>	P.O.L
1997	<i>Je sors ce soir</i>	P.O.L
1998	<i>Plus fort que moi</i>	P.O.L
1999	<i>Nicolas Pages</i>	Balland, coll. <i>Le Rayon</i>
2000	<i>Pop life</i>	Vidéo DV, 19'
	<i>Songs in the key of moi</i>	Vidéo DV, 33'
	Film perdu, sans titre	Vidéo DV, 25'
	<i>Nous (love no end)</i>	Vidéo DV, 80'
2001	<i>Enjoy (back to Ibiza)</i>	Vidéo DV, 103'
	<i>Génie Divin</i>	Balland, coll. <i>Le Rayon</i>
	<i>Pietà</i>	Vidéo DV, 29'
	<i>Home + Sorbelli</i>	Vidéo DV, 55'
	<i>HCD</i>	Vidéo DV, 34'
	<i>Barbette Réaumur</i>	Vidéo DV, 13'
	<i>Porno</i>	Vidéo DV, perdu, 60'?
	<i>Toits moi crevé</i>	Vidéo DV, 63'
2002	<i>LXiR Ou Dédramatison La Vi Cotidièn</i>	Balland, coll. <i>Le Rayon</i>
	(...)	Téléchargeable sur sofa.fr
	<i>Nous 2</i>	Vidéo DV, 63'
	<i>Squat</i>	Vidéo DV, 63'
	<i>Poubelle</i>	Vidéo DV, 62'
	<i>Nietzsche</i>	Vidéo DV, 62'
	<i>Autrechose</i>	Vidéo DV, 11'
2003	<i>Ratés</i>	Vidéo DV, 25'
2004	<i>Dernier roman</i>	Flammarion
	<i>montre t lèvres</i>	Vidéo DV, 21'
2005	<i>Premier essai, Chroniques du temps présent</i>	Flammarion
2013	<i>Œuvres I</i> , éditées par Thomas Clerc	P.O.L
2021	<i>Œuvres II</i> , éditées par Thomas Clerc	P.O.L

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13 March – 16 May 2021

Curated by Julien Laugier, Pascaline Morincôme, Olga Rozenblum, Nicolas Brulhart, Marie Gyger

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Art education : info@fri-art.ch

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