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ART & CULTURE

Culture Talks | *The Chalet Society*

— October 23, 2012 —

Conversations with leading cultural figures



Neki Chand, *Untitled Figures (from Rock Garden)*, c. 1980 © *The Museum of Everything*

Tucked away in the heart of St Germain in Paris' Left Bank, **The Chalet Society** is a new arts institution, established by Marc-Olivier Wahler, esteemed ex-Director of The Palais de Tokyo. Housed in an old Catholic school, the building still show signs of its former life, whilst at the same time breathing new life into its exciting incarnation as an arts space. On the opening of its inaugural exhibition, presented in collaboration with The Museum of Everything, AnOther speaks to Marc-Olivier about establishing the un-established.

How has your experience at The Chalet Society compare to your role at the Palais de Tokyo?

With The Chalet Society, I felt that I should do something that I couldn't do in my position before. At the Palais de Tokyo, I had a strong, clear programme, and I think everyone thought of me as someone who didn't like painting very much, and that within my agenda painting wasn't so important, but with this new institution I have started with a show of over 500 paintings! It's very freeing, and it's great to do the opposite of what I've done for the last six years.

What is the ethos behind the museum?

The museum is more of a collective, and is completely community orientated. I have always tried to go outside of the artworks to find new ways of thinking. When planning The Chalet Society I thought a lot about the way that software is developed; in the beginning, software was always designed for specific platforms and architecture, but the more that software developed the more independent it became, so that eventually software was able to function on practically any platform, mobile, fixed, and so on. So I thought that maybe an art centre could be thought of like software, able to graft on to different types of architecture, but at the same time building an identity which is not dependent on a specific type. With The Chalet Society I hope we can develop a very strong identity, independent of any one specific type of structure.

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Will this fluid structure impact on the way you programme and curate the space?

Yes absolutely, for example I am working on a collaboration with Peter and Shelly Nesbitt, the founders of Triple Candy, and they are now thinking about a new project for spring 2013. Everything is possible; marginal artists or superstars, I don't care. What they



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propose is what's important. There is no hierarchy and no categories. I think in France people like categories, so it's very easy to go against it and do something a bit different. Here it's great because we can do what we want, even if that means closing for two months and doing yoga classes or something. There is no pressure.

For your inaugural exhibition you have worked with James Brett and The Museum of Everything. Was there something about the museum that you were particularly drawn to?

Working with James was really interesting because he is both the collector and also the founder of the museum, so he has a very clear idea of what he wants, so basically I gave him carte blanche. The show focuses on marginalized or unknown artists who were self taught, and everything is from James' own collection, so it is very well thought out.

How does the building itself inform or impact the exhibition programme?

The building is old and the space is temporary, so we will be open until the end of next year after which it will be redeveloped. With the start of the programme I wanted to invite someone who could be integrated with the building as it is, which is why I thought of the Museum of Everything. It makes much more sense to show this kind of work in a space like this - if we showed it in a white cube it would have much less meaning.

On the top floor we'll also have our test workshop, which is based on those magazines you get which test new products. It's a laboratory for ideas, where we take one idea a month and we test it, with different people working in different spheres. We'll bring together a group of people, some of who will work on site throughout the duration too. The result of these tests will be visible to visitors to the Society.

Exhibition #1.1 is at [The Chalet Society](#) until December 15, 2012.

Siobhan Andrews is a London-based writer, specialising in music and the visual arts. She is co-founder of the creative consultancy [Daydreaming Projects](#), and co-curator of the biennial exhibition [Daydreaming with...](#)



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