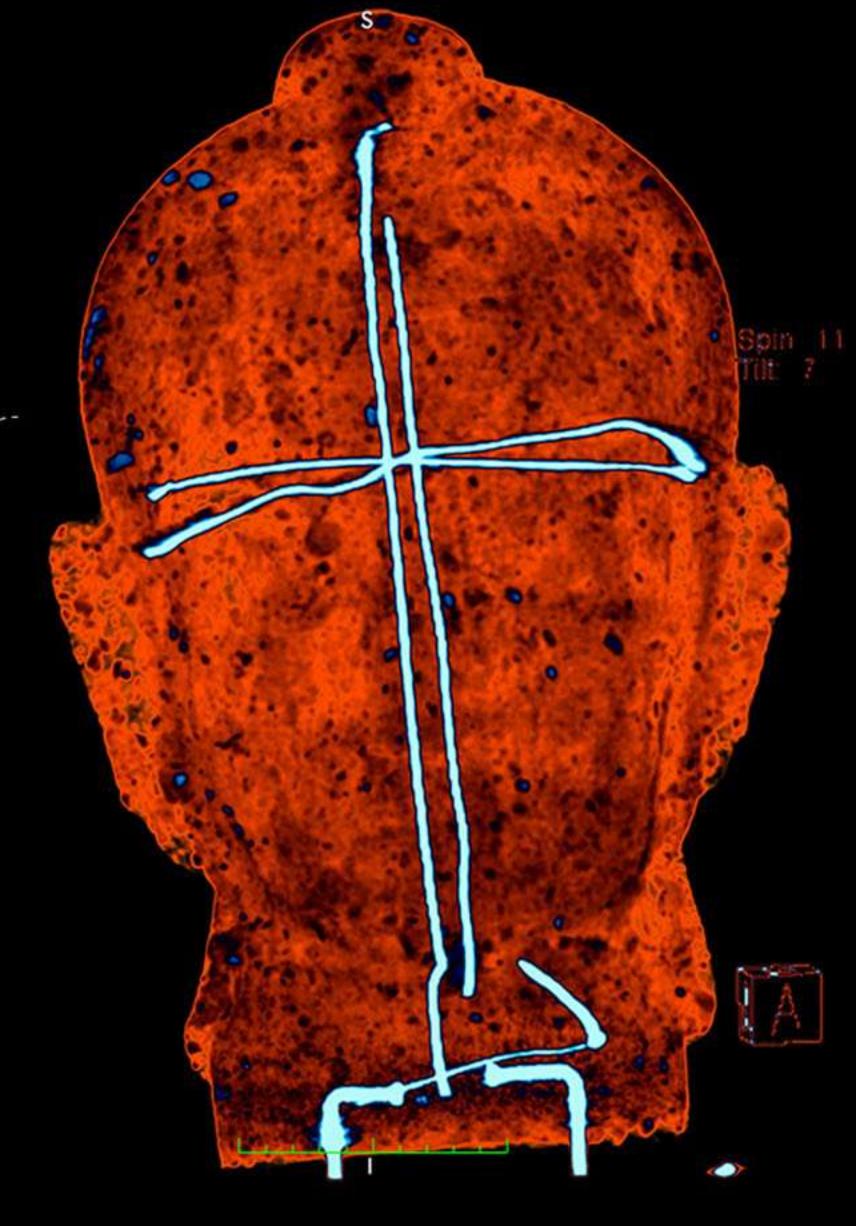
Guillaume Levy-Lambert

Le Secret Sacré

Art Porters Gallery Room 2

10 Jan - 15 Mar 2020









Le Secret Sacré

Levy-Lambert's practice operates at the intersection of personal development and art, focusing on the exploration of how different bodies, technologies, social environments and histories converge. His work deals with the precepts, gaps and energies that lie at the core of how a sense of self, as well as a collective social order are formed. His practice engages with both familiar, shared conditions as well as elusive and undisclosed content to produce forms that excite the imagination, raise fundamental questions, channel simmering undercurrents, seduce and alienate, engage with expectations, mystify as well as help re-articulate our experiences with the shifting artistic order.

Le Secret Sacré brings together a collaboration of multi-sensory works based on a present yet sometimes invisible thread: the haunting computer-generated imagery augmented by medical imaging technologies, videography, music and scent all embrace unexpected contexts and focus on the essential role of the artist in igniting public imagination and animating society's largest challenges."

- Savita Apte, curator

Le Secret Sacré is supported by BNP Paribas. A portion of proceeds from the exhibition will be gifted to the Kantha Bopha Foundation's Jayavarman VII Children Hospital in Siem Reap.

It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be?

Marianne Williamson

Artist statement

I document Divine providence.

G-d creates, we reveal.

Artists are acutely aware that their perception of the world is unique and thrive to share it. Impressionists revealed light and colour, through their art like none before them. Pop art disclosed the beauty of a can of soup or of a comic strip. I document Divine providence.

It has been suggested that coincidences are G-d's way of remaining anonymous. I choose instead to see and share the Divine in my life.

I was asked why I still have not opened my gift. Well, for one, it's a way to document what happened, for all to see. Miracles happen in our daily lives, everything is a miracle, we're just blind to them, like we often are to inner beauty. Also, in accordance with Japanese custom, I said I won't open it in front of the person who gave it to me. I now understand that the dear friends who carried the heavy gift from Phnom Penh to Singapore back in 2007 are agents of Divine providence: they were bringing me a gift from the Heavens, at the time I was starting on my journey to come out as an artist.

Vive la révélation!

Guillaume Levy-Lambert



An essay by Savita Apte

Le Secret Sacré

Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet, Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment seat; But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth, When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth!

From "The Ballad of East and West" by Rudyard Kipling, first published in 1889.

Although the first line of the verse has been oft quoted to demonstrate a supposed division between people from the East and West and been misquoted by those who feel it validates their narrow vision of the cultural world, the stanza read in its entirety clearly points to mutual respect built on character and integrity, which overrides accidents of birthplace, nationality, race and family. Differences in ethnicity are deemed inconsequential. Guillaume Levy-Lambert, a French artist who has made Singapore his home is the epitome of Kipling's sentiments. Rather than dwell on differences, Levy-Lambert has chosen to find the richness and the resonance of the divine in all humankind whether from the East or the West and *Le Secret Sacré* establishes this core message and weaves it through the entire exhibition.

Indeed the exhibition itself is both structured and annotated to stimulate collaboration and innovation, incorporating as it does music from Devi Reed featuring Cam Ryon and video by Israeli video artist Romy Engel and even a fragrance in collaboration with Givaudan. The result is an interdisciplinary, multi-sensory installation based on the conviction that artistic creation can draw on all forms of knowledge and means. The resultant works are grounded in the artist's own values and socially committed purpose. For Levy-Lambert, his art is deeply and inseparably integrated into both society and its spiritual debates. To this end, Levy-Lambert layers the personal and poetic, resourced through memory, medical technology and contemporary installation that draw together signs, symbols, history, personal narrative, spiritualism and the presence of the divine. It is thus only natural that Levy-Lambert engages multiple temporalities – from singular intimate moments to the concept of time on an epic, regal scale.

Le Secret Sacré is tightly intertwined with the processes of historiography and creates dynamic and plural relations among and beyond the participants – human and nonhuman. It ignites the viewers' imagination and forces the viewer to embrace the unexpected contexts presented so that the exhibition connects different histories while writing history: the reciprocal relationships lend the objects on view an even greater complexity and transformative power.

Central to the exhibition is the wrapped sculptural form – a gift from a grateful friend. In 2007, a friend from Paris stayed with Levy-Lambert for a few days after holidaying in Cambodia. As a thank you to Levy-Lambert for his hospitality, the friend carried a voluminous gift, wrapped, as was the custom in local (Cambodian) newspaper. The gift was appropriately chosen and purchased at the museum store in the National Museum, Phnom Penh. Levy-Lambert accepted the present, but following Japanese custom which he liked very much, did not unwrap the gift in the presence of the friend and the gift remained as it was – swathed in its newspapers – gently yellowing with the years.

And then... a few months later, Levy-Lambert felt the need to organise a computed tomography (CT Scan). The result was both expected and unexpected. The scan revealed the apotheosis of Jayavarman VII, one of the greatest rulers of Kambuja (Cambodia) with a cross like metal strut on which the head was manufactured. Jayavarman VII was a Mahayana Buddhist and was the ruler under whom 102 hospitals across the region as well as a number of significant shrines were built. Inscriptions evidence huge quantities of gold and silver were used for provisions for invalids, medicines and indeed in Jayavarman VII's eulogy is written "the physical pain of men became in him a mental pain and was more painful to him [Jayavarman VII] than to the actual invalids for it is the sufferings of the state which make the sufferings of kings and not their own pain". Jayavarman VII has been credited with building the Bayon with its 200 human faced towers and the preponderance of Avalokiteshwara both within and on the surface of the shrines. These statues with divine attributes in the likeness of human individuals reiterated the notion of a sacred form or a subtle inner essence and the diffusion of divinity rather than a royal cult designed to hold the population in awed subjugation to a superhuman despot. They underscored the deeply held belief that human likeness and human nomenclature must be capable of a subtle metamorphosis into divinity. 1

(cont.)

¹ For a detailed study into the life, times and accomplishments of Jayavarman VII see Mabbett, I. W. "Devarāja." *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 10, no. 2 (1969): 202-23. www.jstor.org/stable/20067742.; G. Coedes the Cult of the Defied Royalty, Source of Inspiration of the Great Monuments of Angkor, in *Art and Letters* Vol XXVI 1952 pp 51-53 as well as significant research on the subject and its contexts by G Coedes and J Przyluski, P. Sharrock, S. Chemburkar.

Fascinated with this ambiguity of g-d-king diving relationship and its cyclical activity, at once fleeting and recurring, the exhibition presents four immersive installations which explore the material and digital worlds of our past, present and speculative futures. Mythology, philosophy and spirituality converge with personal and collective narratives, popular culture and art history in visual, aural and spatial configurations that simultaneously confront and confound. Within the artworks are embedded concepts that are at once real and fictive and inherently performative, the works are informed by the aesthetics of the internet combined with medical imaging technology which in itself evokes ideas of echo, reiteration and re-articulation and consequently a kaleidoscopic image of familiar and unfamiliar references.

Germane to this exhibition are the questions posed by Levy-Lambert – how are analogue and digital images handled in contemporary society? What is the state of play when it comes to the relationship between material and immateriality; between body, screen and photographic surface? Levy-Lambert's practice is dedicated to a very intimate exploration of art in relation to technology and to the process of materialisation of scientific and artistic ideas through which he developed a fascination for movement and illusion. Levy-Lambert's prior occupation in advertising and the consequent fascination and contradictions that emanate from product photography are echoed in his art which sheds light on the associated mechanisms of enticement and concealment. Levy-Lambert responds in his own unique way to the significance studio photography and product photography played in the development and deployment of his personal aesthetic, imagination and manifold artistic strategies and the exhibition's broader affirmation of the need for establishing a horizontal platform for reading contemporary artistic practices of various lineages. The dominant elements in the medical imaging work and the fluorescent palette bring Pop art and a certain Warholian aspect to mind. The playful use of colour can also be read as a challenge to conventional bourgeois conception of art in which exuberant colourfulness is incompatible with reflective gravitas. In addition, Levy-Lambert uses colour to explore the way in which masculinity is experienced, performed and socially constructed from the time of Jayavarman VII to the present day. In a world where cultural, religious and expressive barriers are increasingly being tightened, Levy-Lambert is experimenting with openness, permeability and the construction of a new space where racial, sexual and social freedom can be experienced.

With his motif, material choices, stylistic devices and playful reinventions, Levy-Lambert does not merely quote from art history, he looks for potential to rethink the world since we desperately need another system of co-ordinates, another distribution of metaphors and sensitivities, as well as novel fictions and imaginaries to address constituencies and configuration of the present and to restate speculation about direction in the future.

As a convergence of collaborations, this exhibition aims to draw attention to the effects of a practice that stems from research and curatorial intervention. Levy-Lambert's practice is focussed on shedding light on the invisible and on investing in words to name the unnameable. This compilation of works resembles a group of ghosts that despite exceeding the means we have to understand them, bring us closer to other ways of existing, other planes and dimensions. Levy-Lambert's practice brings together these ways of doing and ways of being and point to loose and entangled ends that eventually illuminate who we are and who we can become; where we are and what paths open up in front of us. His practice is subtle and activated in specific encounters and operates from a foundation of faith. It appears contradictory — implying at one and the same time what is inside and what is outside and simultaneously emphasising the one and the many — it evidences a tangled self, blurry around the borders and yet it is timeless, unofficial and nonverbal – like intuition, feeling, hunches and memory, each of which in turn offers a sense of belonging and relevance.

It is in this vein that the exhibition is an homage to both Jayavarman VII and to Christo whom Levy-Lambert holds in veneration. Two great men, one from the East and the other from the West, who changed the perception to art and architecture, who raised the funds for their great works themselves and who were at the forefront of transformation and metamorphosis.

(cont.)

Christo and Jeanne Claude's *The Pont Neuf Wrapped* 1975-1985 was the work which transformed Levy-Lambert's mind in innumerable ways. It afforded him a greater insight into the sculptural and architectural qualities of the Pont Neuf – that wrapping, concealing the bridge revealed so much about not just the physical aspect of the bridge but about the psychology of the city and the people using the bridge. It halted the massive transformations of the bridge and its encyclopaedic evidence of the lives and times of Paris and its inhabitants and made it real in the here and now. It accentuated its history whilst celebrating its present. Being a Parisian at the time made it all very personal.

Indeed Levy-Lambert's own practice is personal and intimate and yet accessible, where experience is permitted to expand beyond instruments, ideas and methodologies. It is psychodramatic and presents and represents ideas – turning them into actions, spaces and moments. It is a practice of contingencies of context and the spirit of the moment, based on a closeness that can be appropriated, understood and amalgamated. It is above all a practice of the future based on the power of art to affect what is yet to happen – an emancipatory practice – a documentation of divine providence.





Foreword by Joris Dierckx

Head of South-East Asia BNP Paribas

The artist invites us to share *Le Secret Sacré*, to share an unopened gift, which is transformed into a treasure, a voyage of discovery and a work of art. The exhibition offers us discovery, immersion, enchantment, revelation and re-invention. We are given the gift of an encompassing experience of the seen and the unseen, the apparent and the hidden, the intended, the providential and the coincidental, of the material and the digital world.

The work pays homage to King Jayavarman VII, Khmer art, Christo but also to friendship, care and hospitality as well as different conventions across cultures. We are offered a multisensorial perception of the unopened gift through photography, video, music and perfume brought to us from Cambodia, France, India, Israel, Japan.

The curator refers to Kipling's message of mutual respect and integrity in diversity. *Le Secret Sacré* is seen to stimulate collaboration and innovation, reflecting the power of art to affect what is yet to happen.

As "The bank for a changing world", at BNP Paribas we want to have a positive impact on our stakeholders - customers, employees, shareholders - and on society. We want to contribute to a better future. BNP Paribas is open to different cultures and realities and a natural supporter of diversity in the broadest sense of the term. And we place contemporary creativity at the heart of our cultural sponsorship.

Guillaume Levy-Lambert and the exhibition he has created, in their own multi-faceted way reflect and enliven these values of openness, diversity and positive impact. With the long shared history between Guillaume and BNP Paribas, we are pleased and proud to support him in the realisation of his vision of *Le Secret Sacré*.









Homage to Christo (part one)

2007

Cambodian newspaper, scotch tape, mysterious gift Approximately H60 x W35 x D40 cm

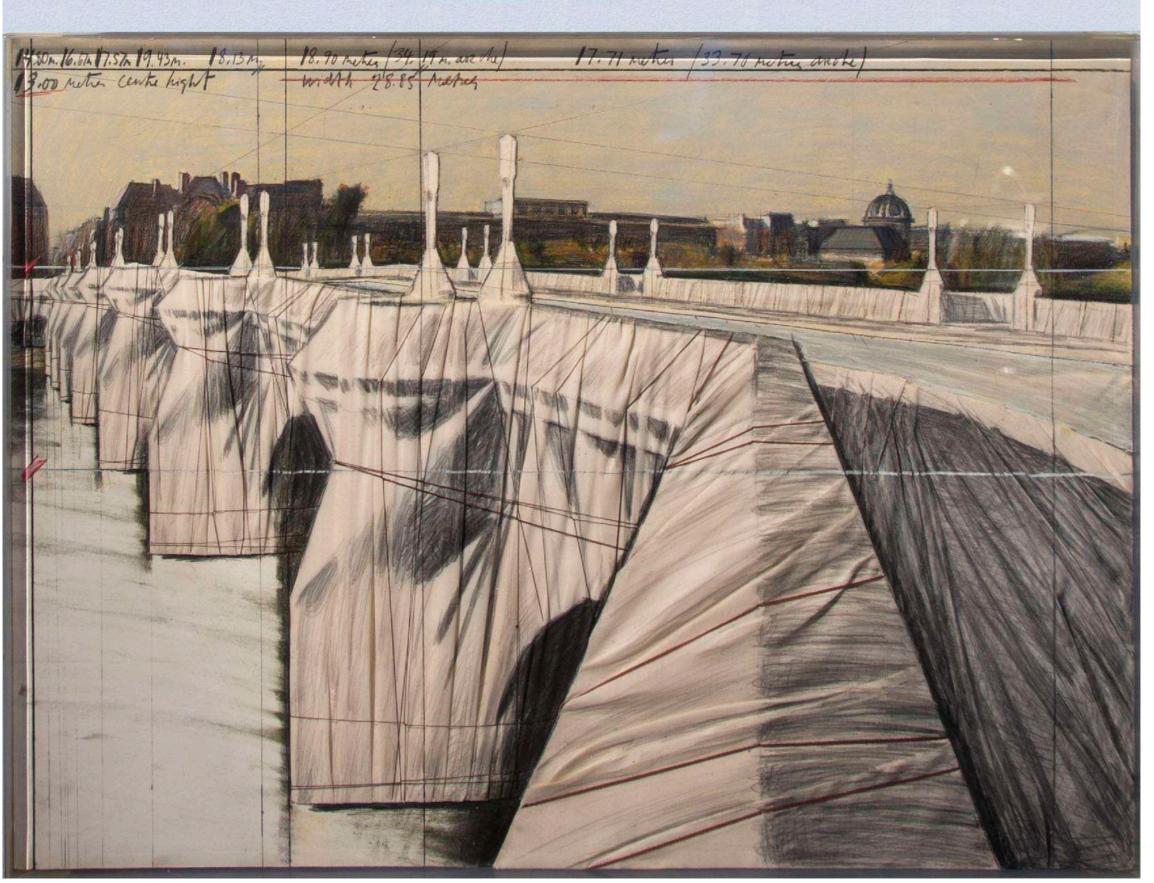
This work is presented together with

Homage to Christo (part two)

an original work by Christo

(following page)





The Pont-Neuf, Wrapped (project for Paris) CHRISTO, 1985

Architectural drawing and map collage on card, fabric, thread, wax crayon, pastel and charcoal on paper H28 x W71 cm. (part 1); H56 x W71 cm. (part 2) within two plexiglass frames



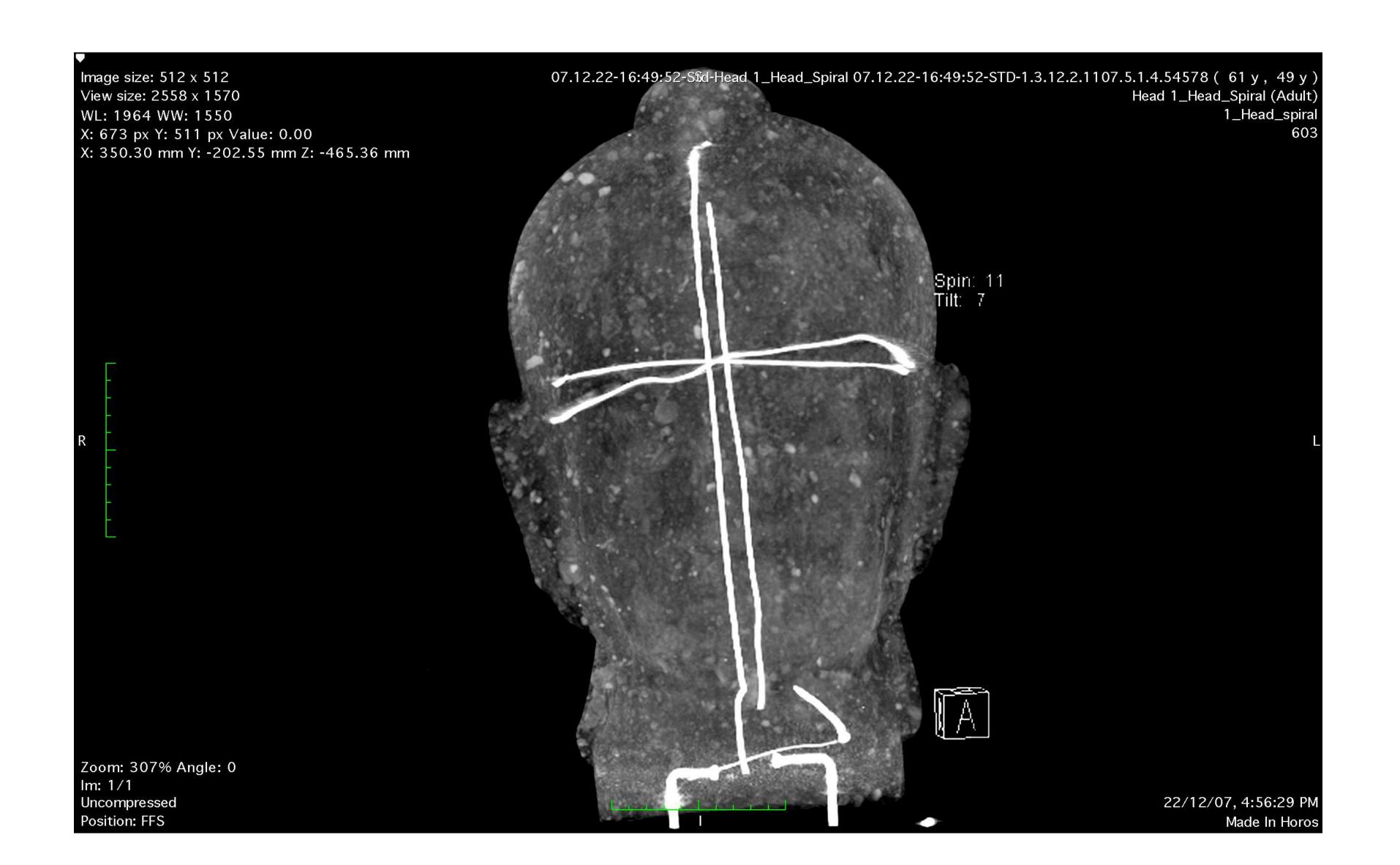
This is not advertising (single) 2019

Fuji Medical Dry Imaging Film and single panel mobile X Ray viewing box
X ray viewing box
H170 x W46 x D44 cm
X ray film
H43 x W35 cm
Edition of 5 + 1 AP



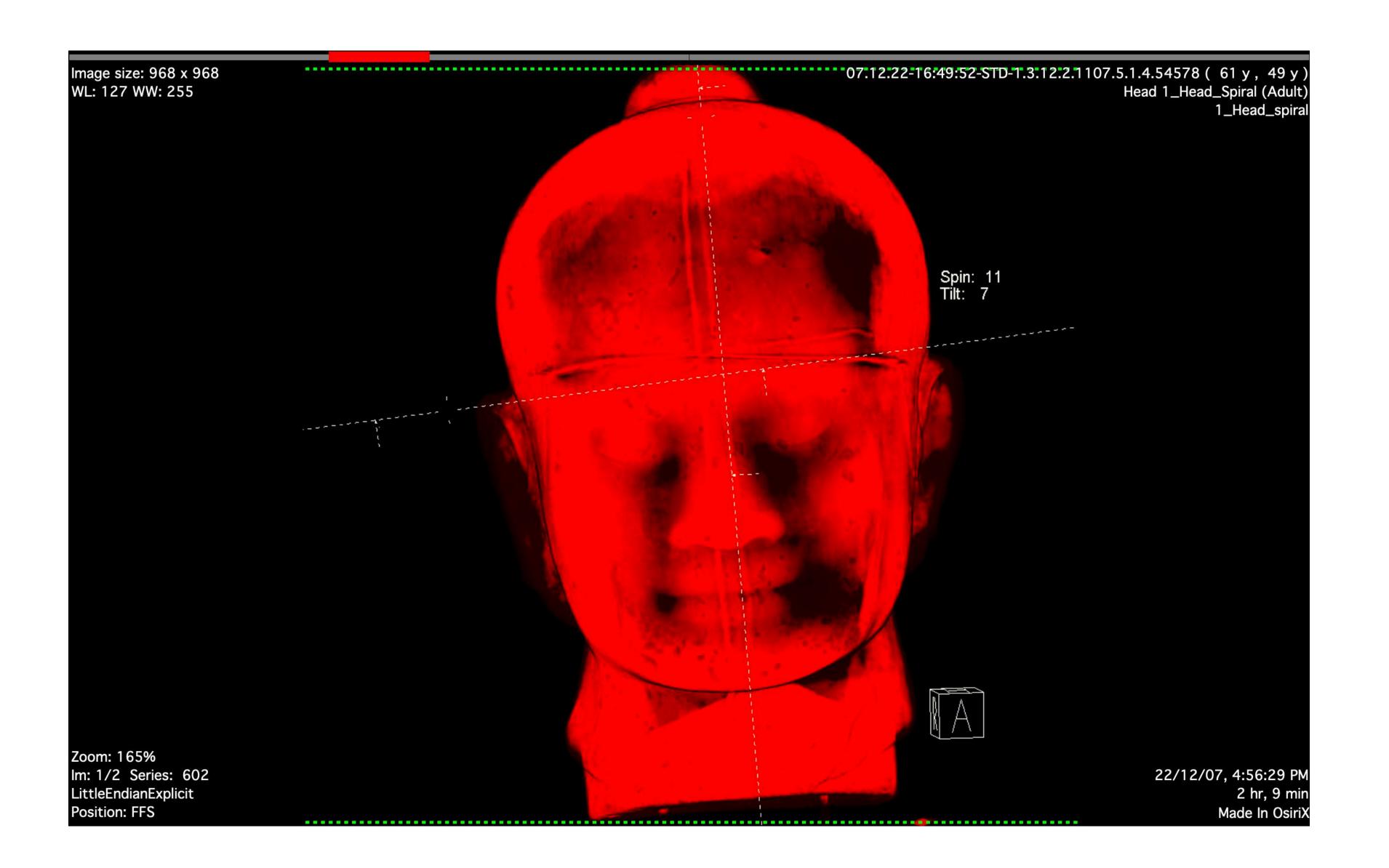
This is not advertising (double) 2019

Fuji Medical Dry Imaging Film and double panel mobile X Ray viewing box
X ray viewing box
H168 x W46 x D81.5 cm
X ray film
H43 x W35 cm x 2
Edition of 5 + 1 AP



Le Heaume 2019

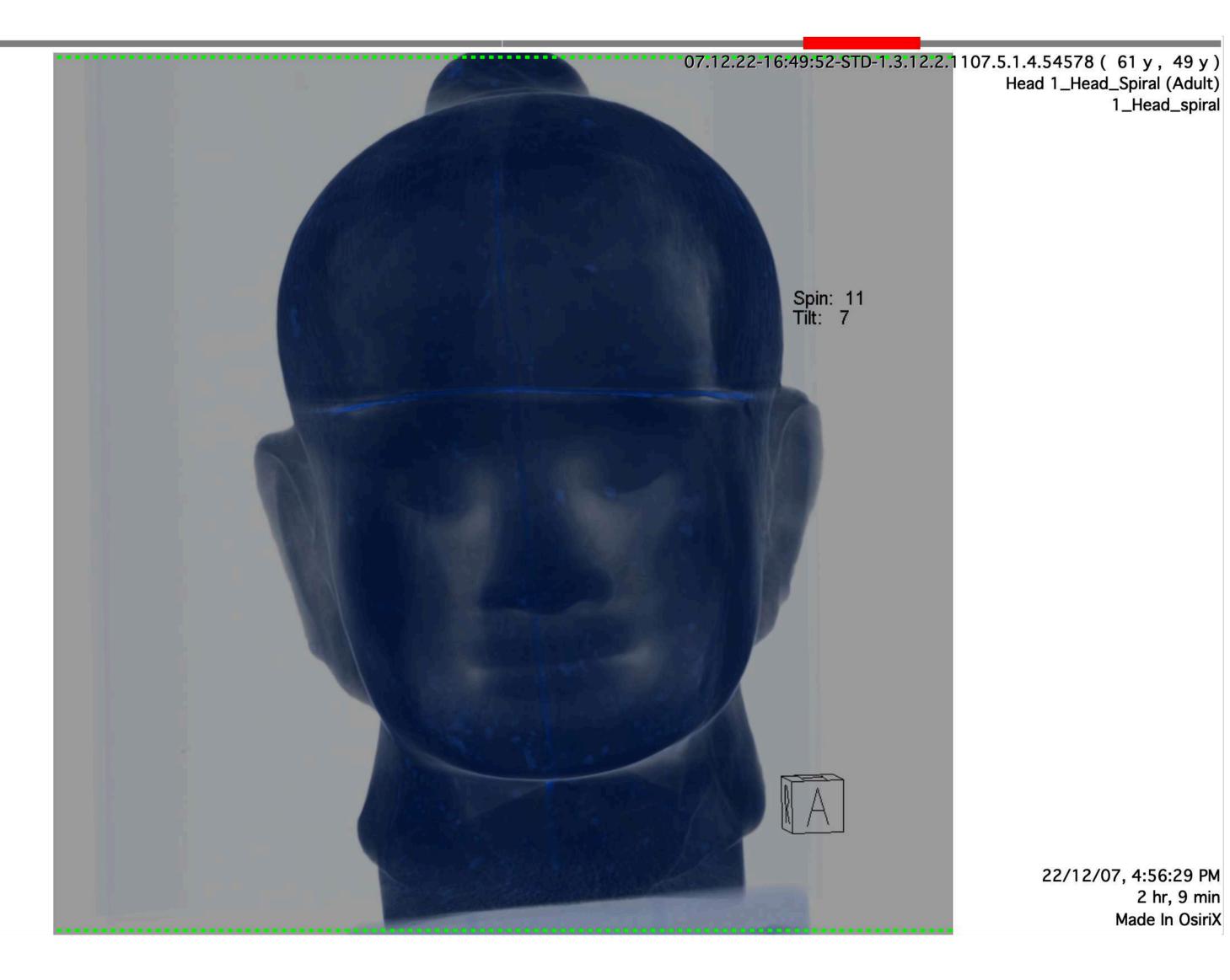
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Le Repos Rouge 2019

Archival print on ILFORD Smooth Rag H62.5 x W100 cm Unique + 1 AP

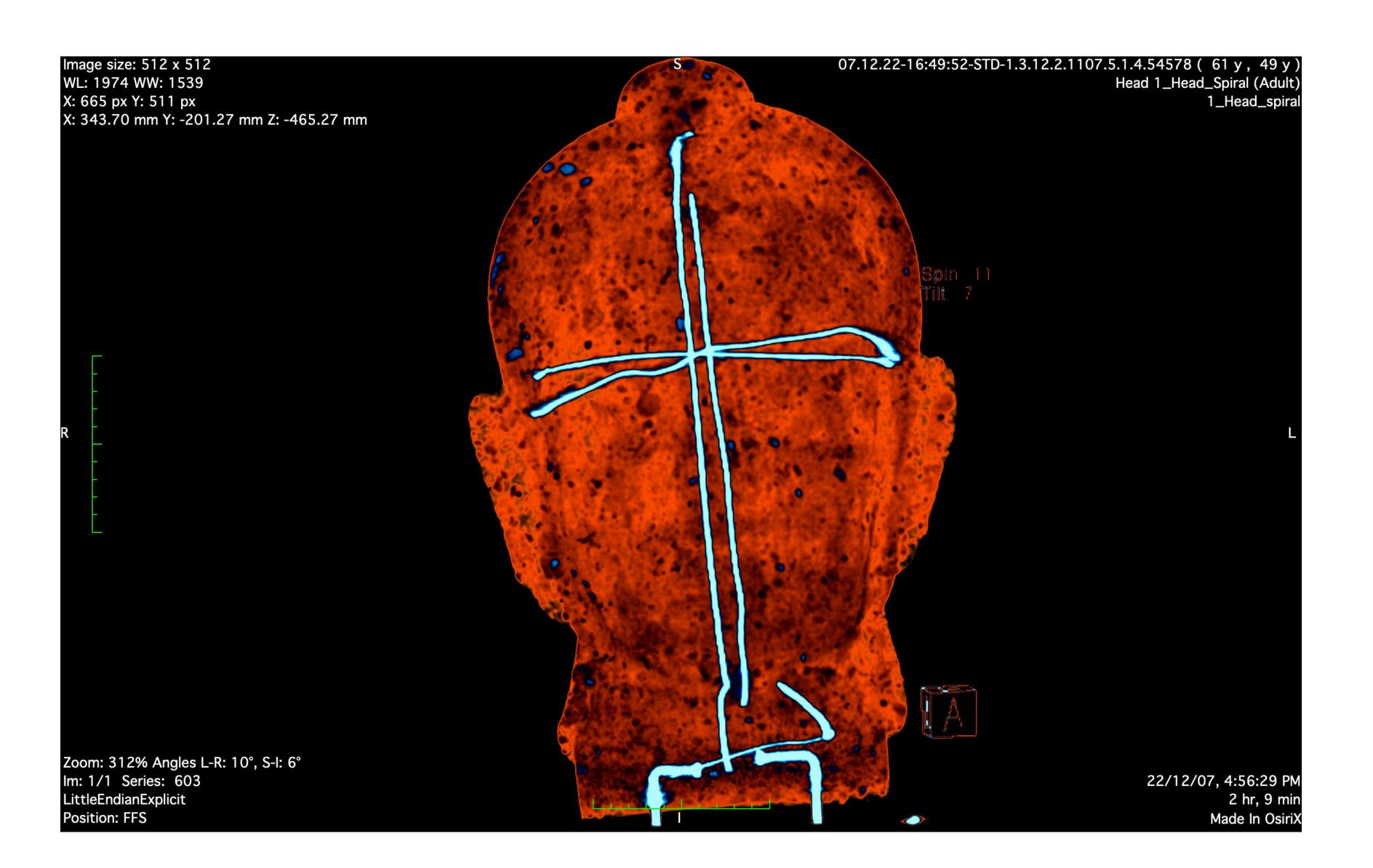
Image size: 968 x 968 WL: 38 WW: 350 X: 1257 px Y: 958 px X: 0.00 mm Y: 0.00 mm



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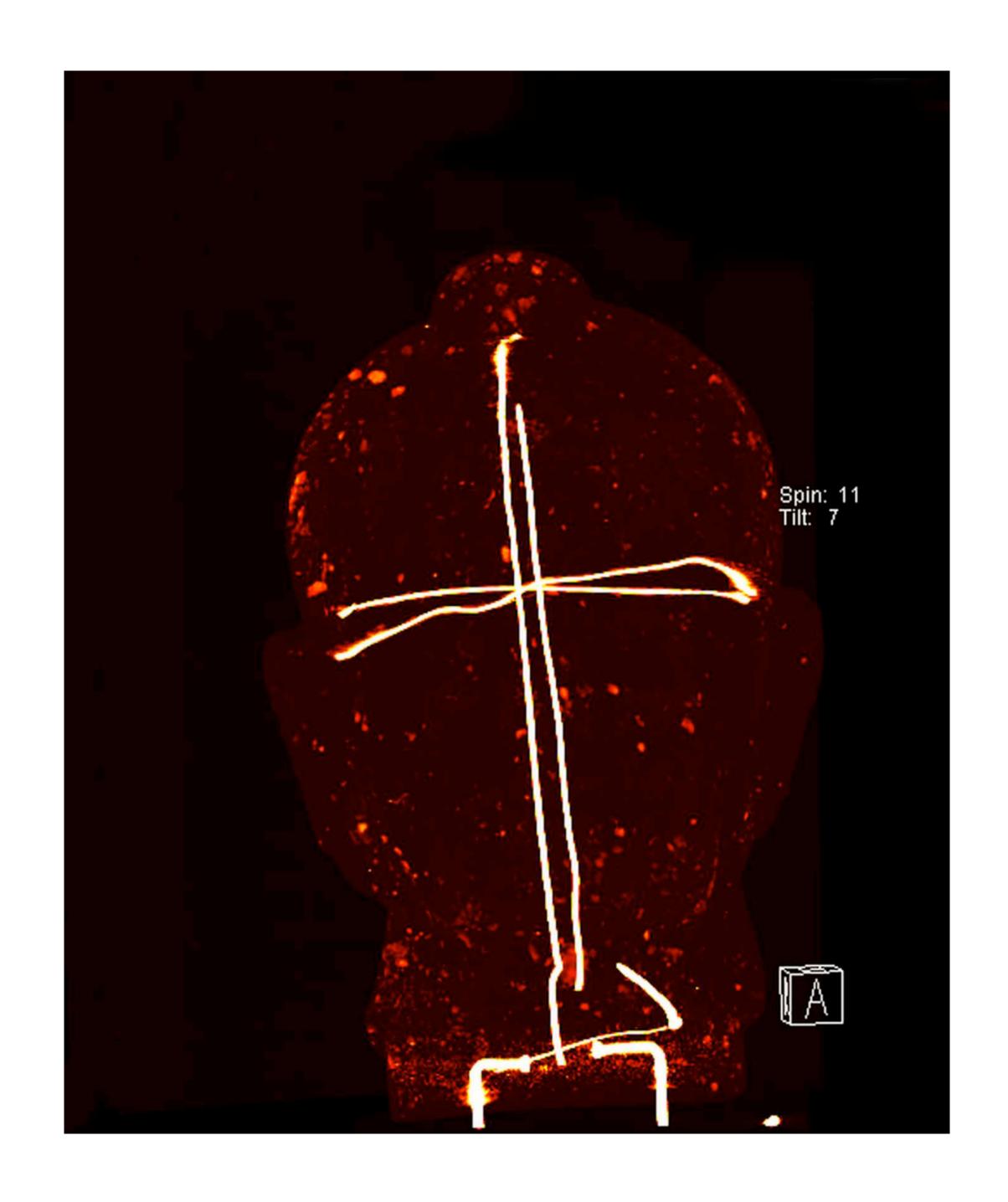
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Zoom: 165% lm: 2/2 Series: 602 LittleEndianExplicit Position: FFS

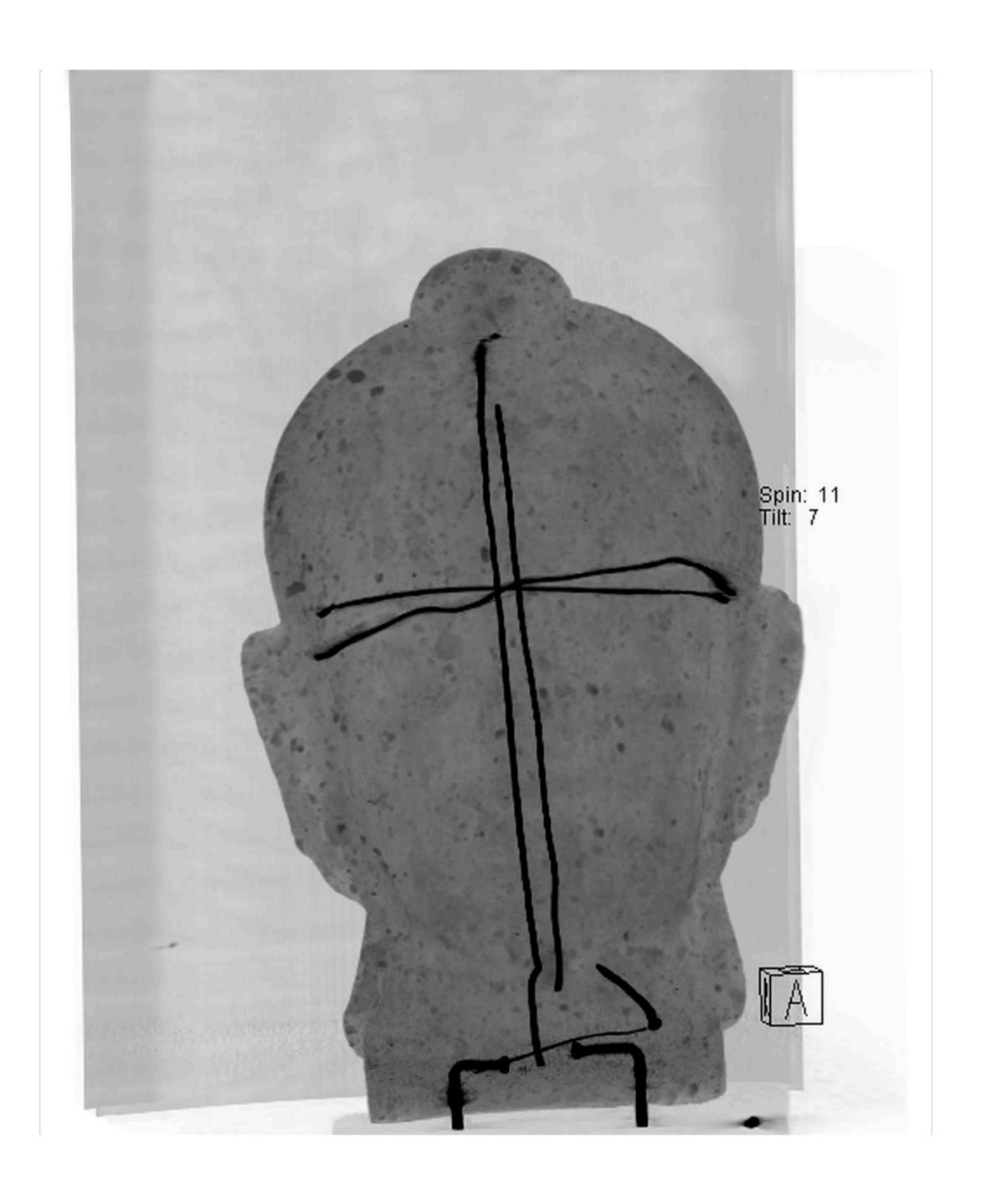


New York Night 2019

Archival print on ILFORD Smooth Rag H62.5 x W100 cm Unique + 1 AP



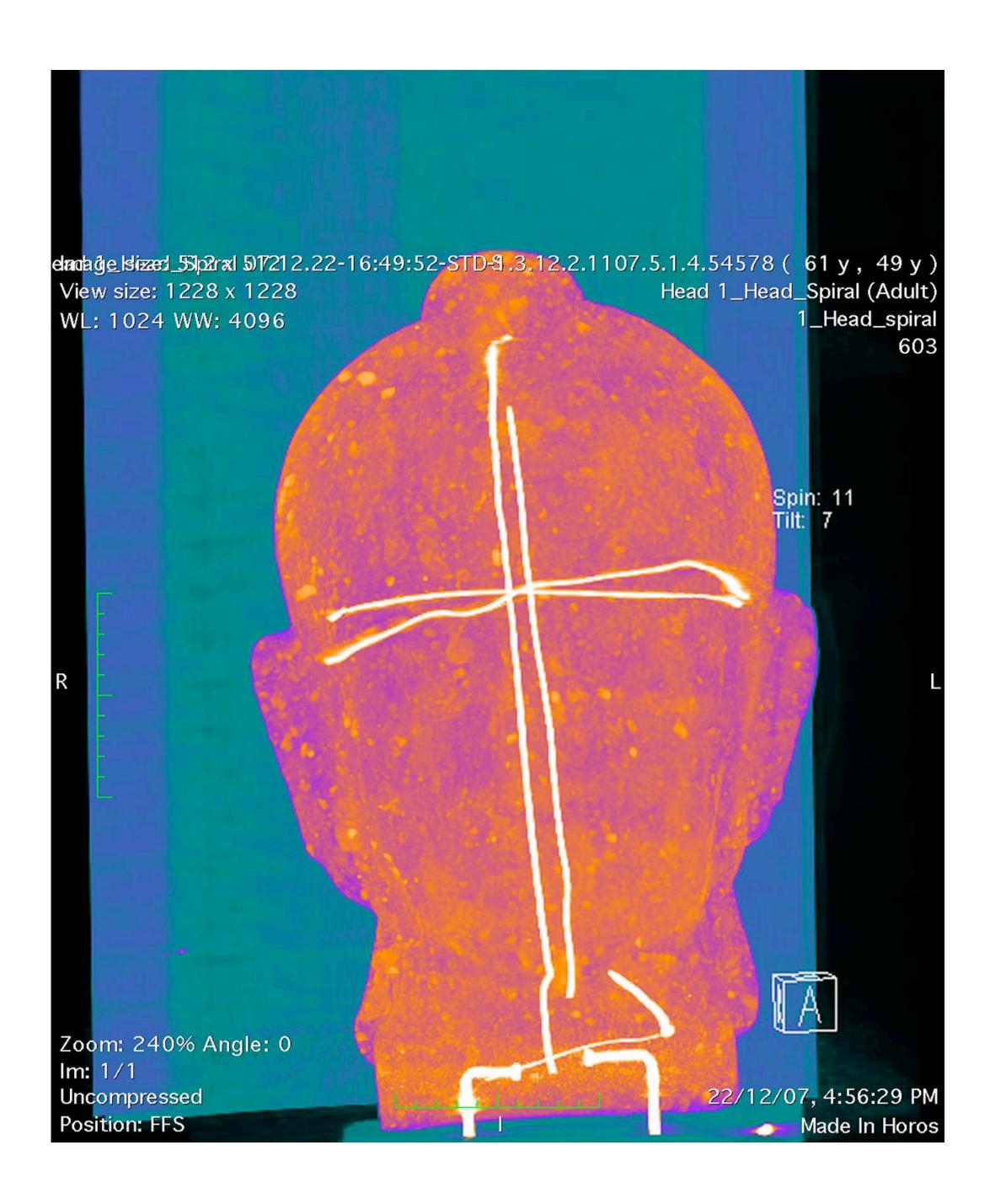
Croix Brûlante 2019



Croix Grise 2019



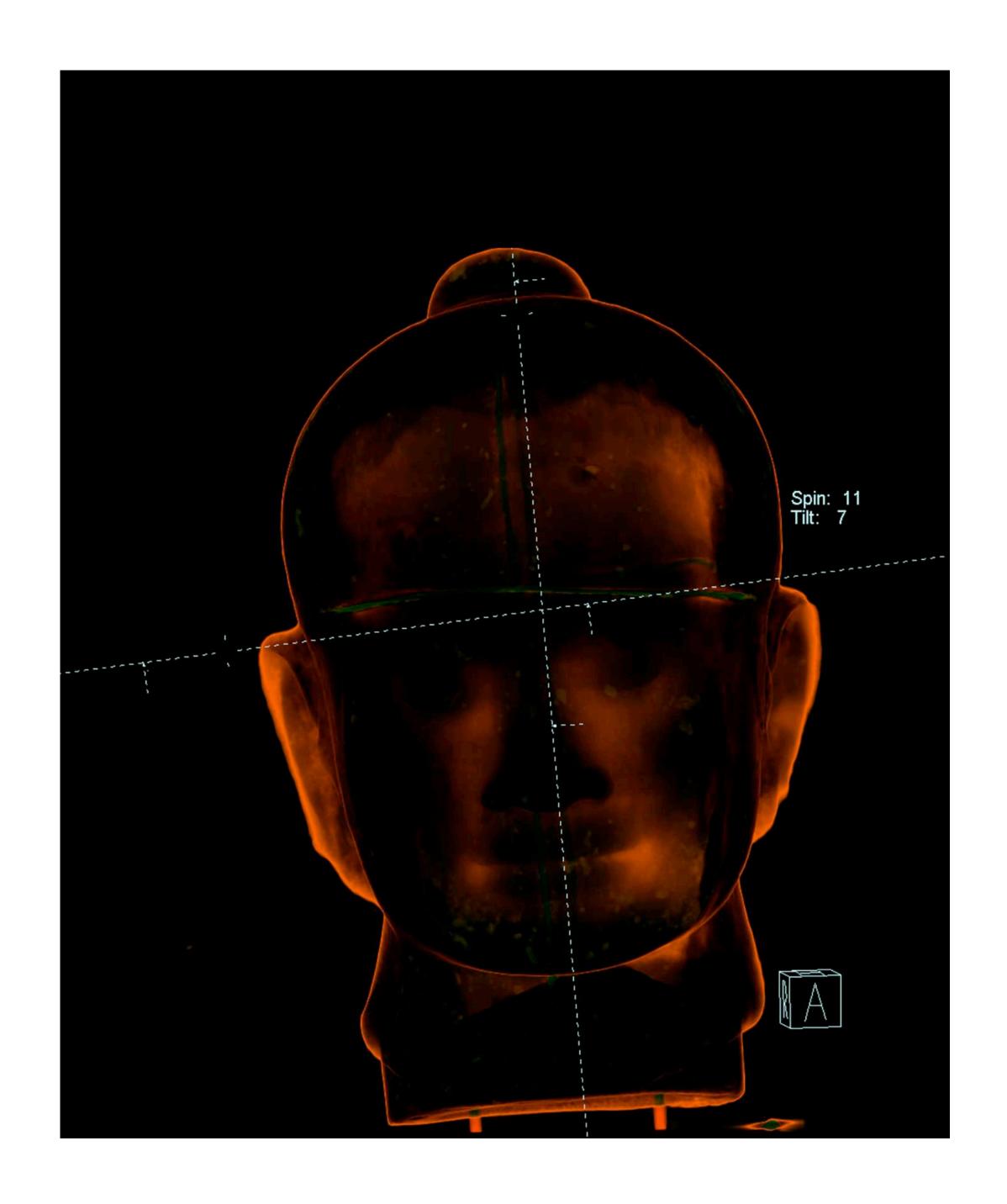
Croix Jaune



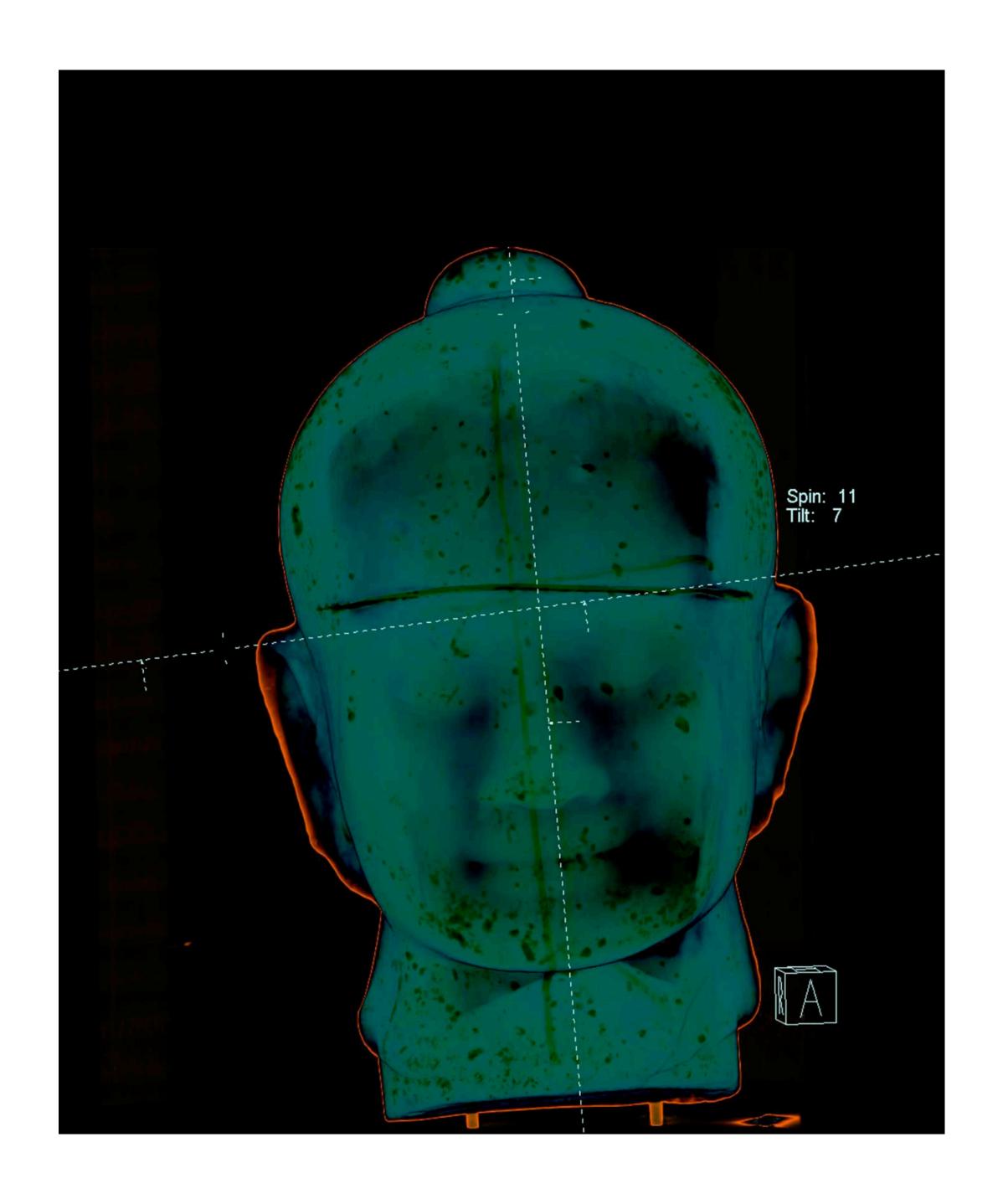
Croix Pop 2019



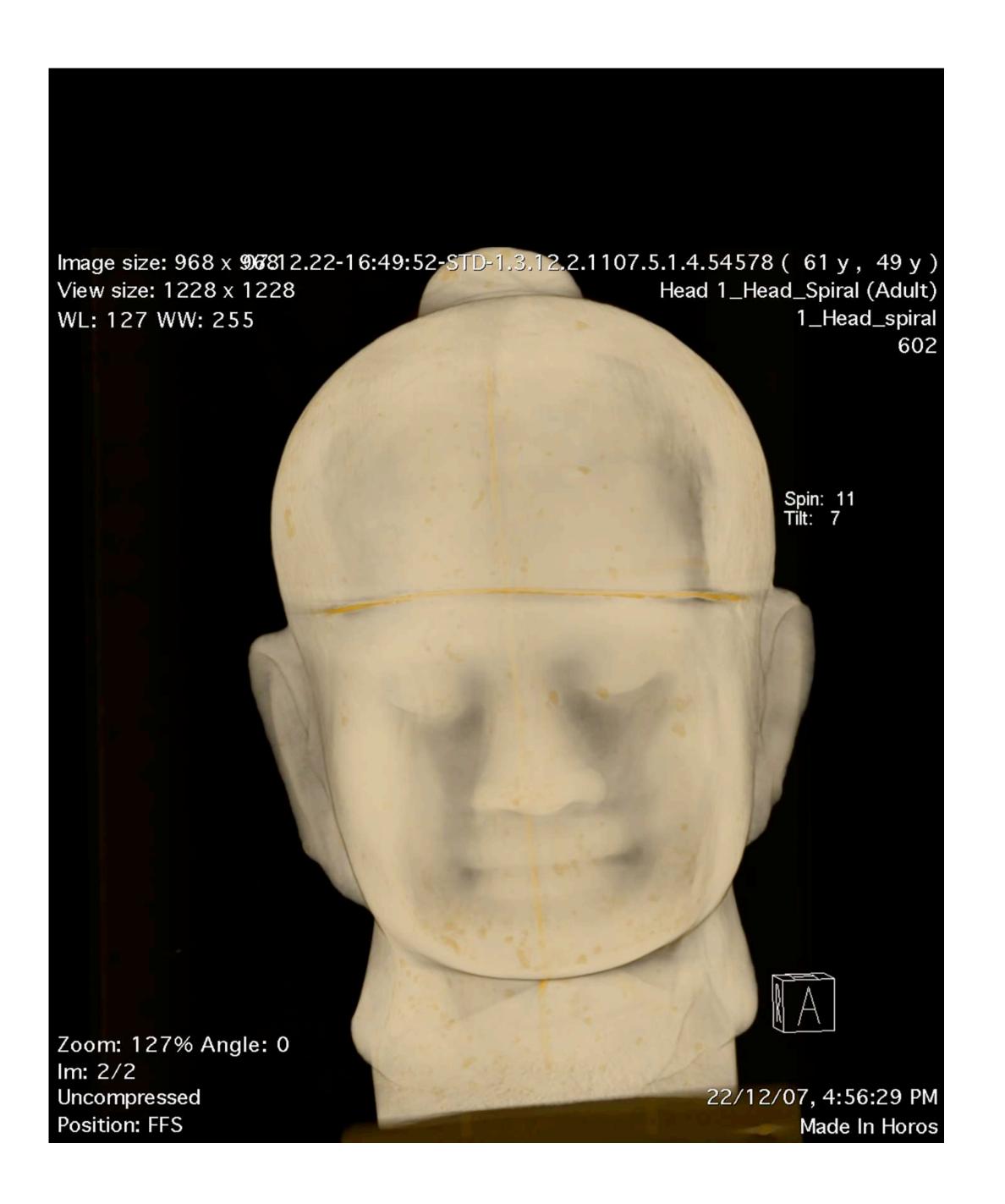
Face D'ange 2019



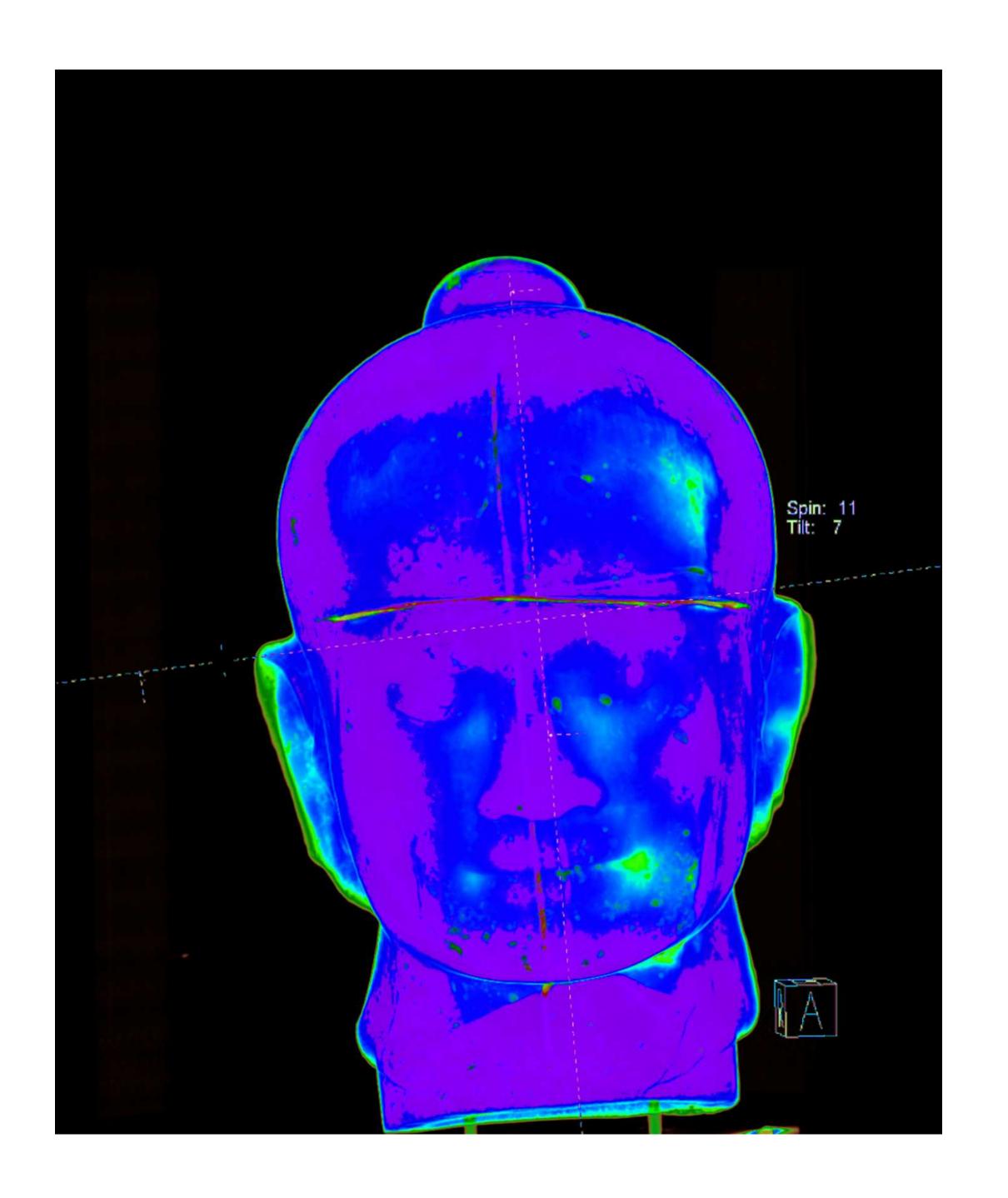
Face D'ange 2



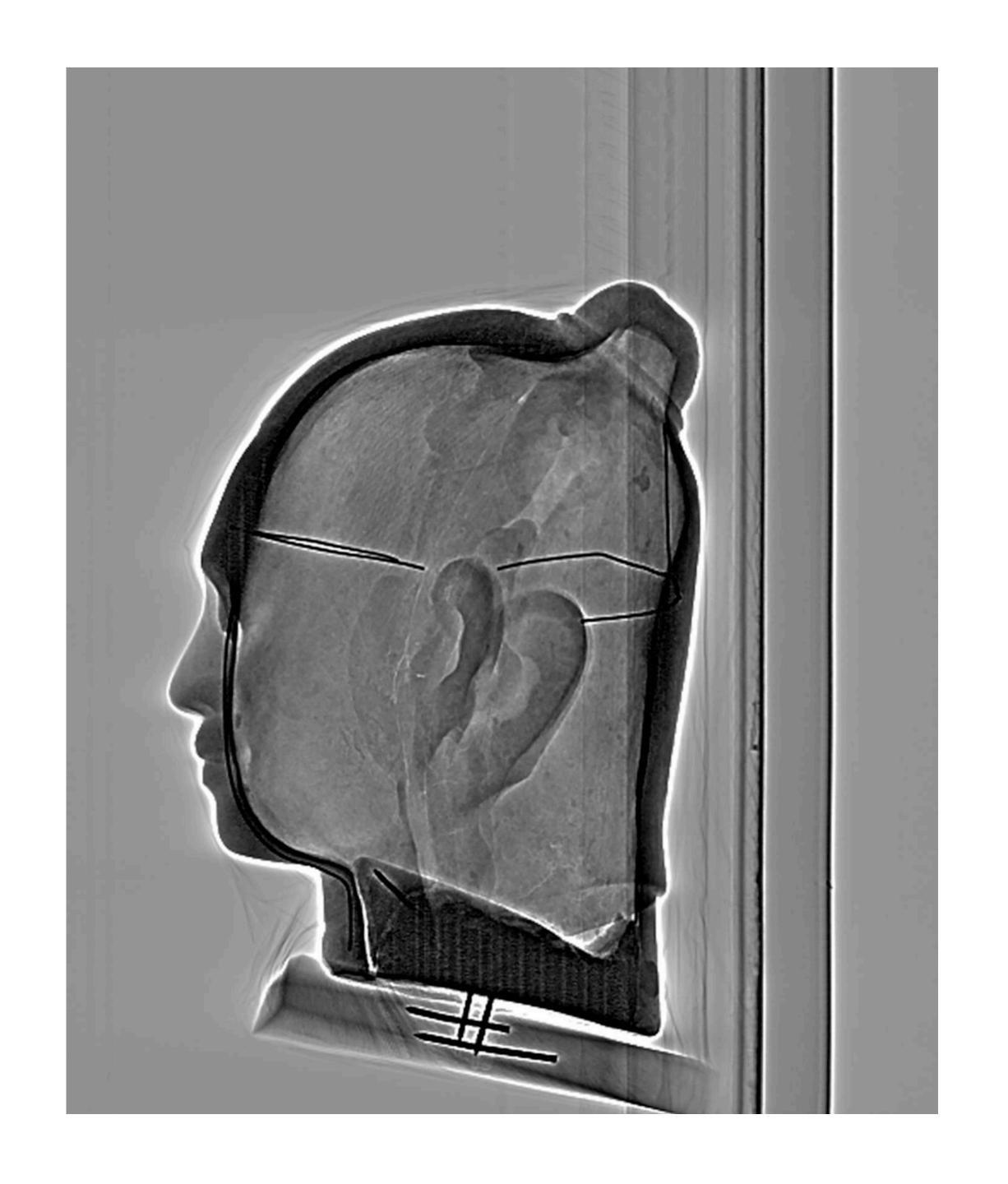
Face D'ange 3 2019



Face D'ange 4



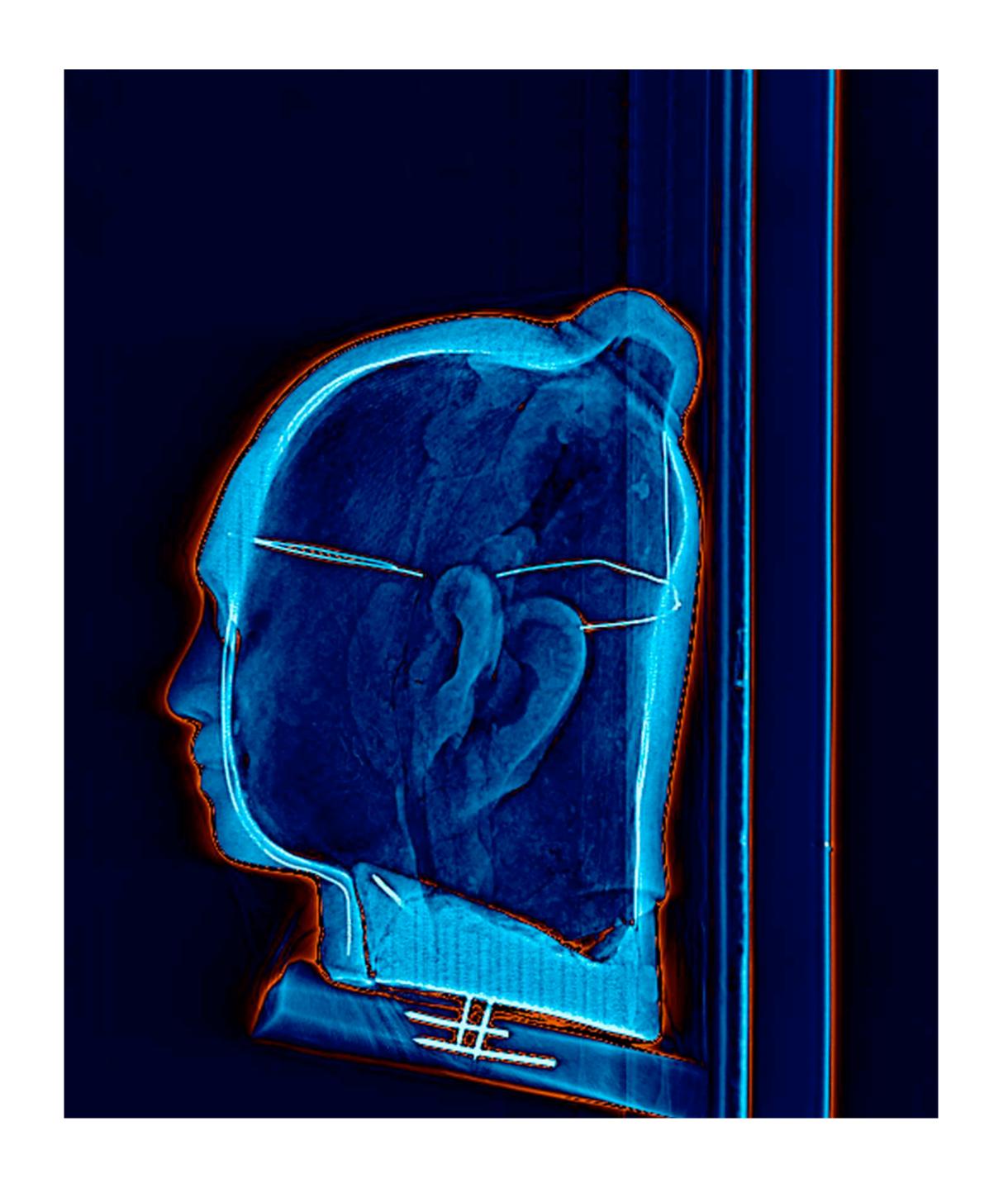
Face D'ange 5



Sérénité 1 2019



Sérénité 2 2019



Sérénité 3 2019

Ren'essence in collaboration with Givaudan

Bespoke perfume for Le Secret Sacré

The enchanting, unique scent inspired by the 'sweetness of the Sacred secret' is at the same time mysterious and majestic, as it conjures the imagined presence of a reincarnated King Jayavarman VII.

"I have been immediately touched by the artwork of Guillaume and the story of King Jayavarman VII. Guillaume has made it a timeless story, with this statue re-revealed by modern technologies. It is like a new life and new beginning for this King.

I then worked on the idea of the fragrance also being part of this re-revelation and wanted to craft a fragrance that would bring optimism and light, a bit like a regenerative sunrise.

This fragrance is above all solar and radiant. It is using several natural fragrance materials widely available in the region, and that the King could have smelt during his reign.

The fragrance opens on a floral heart of Jasmine Sambac and Osmanthus from China softened with an accord of flower honey. This brings an intense, warm and radiant yellow color typical of bright sunrise.

A mineral facet can then be perceived coming from Ambregris, and representing the statue, and also all the multiple temples built by the King.

A wrapping and comforting note of Benzoin Gum from Laos is finally bringing an elegant trail.

The secret of this fragrance and its unique vibration is coming from a Givaudan exclusive ingredient called Akigalawood®. Thanks to modern Biotechnology, we can reveal some unique woody and spicy facets of Patchouli from Indonesia. Akigalawood® is then bringing a unique energy and olfactive signature to the fragrance making it always mysteriously present and radiant."

Carine Certain Boin

Perfumer Givaudan



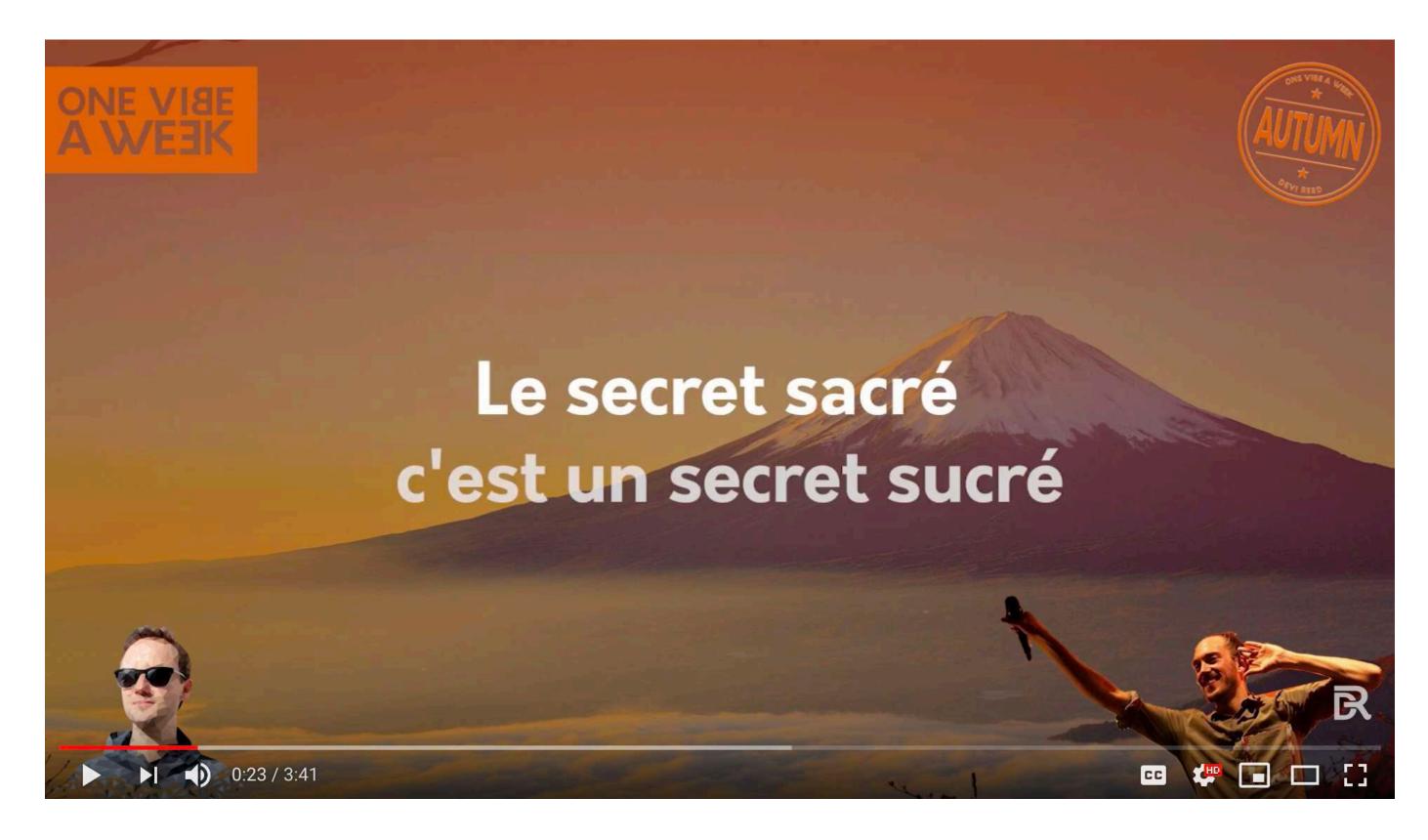
Carine Certain Boin Givaudan perfumer

Magical is how Givaudan perfumer Carine Certain Boin sees perfume. That something intangible and ethereal can inspire fantasies, satisfy wanderlust and give an immense sense of pleasure is nothing short of wonder. She has been under the spell of scents since she was a child, and it led her to the Givaudan Perfumery School. Today, she is practicing this art herself and gives moments of magic to others. Carine's fragrances have an unexpected and exciting contrast of delicacy and strength, whether she explores the sensuality of woods, the warmth of spices or the luscious sweetness of berries. Carine's creations are included in brands such as Tommy Hilfiger, S.T. Dupont, Innisfree and Designal.



Devi Reed - Le Secret Sacré (Song) ft. Cam Ryon

Accompanying the exhibition is a song by French singer Devi Reed aptly titled *Le Secret Sacré*, featuring Cam Ryon. The reggae-infused song celebrates the project and adds a joyful musical experience. It repeats the line *Le secret sacré c'est un secret sucré* in its catchy chorus, which translates to *The sacred secret is a sweet secret* in English; perfectly describing the sentiment of the project. The similar pronunciation between *sacré* and *sucré* can be seen as a metaphor nuancing coincidence and Divine providence. It is a matter of perspective.



Link to song on YouTube

Devi ReedSinger

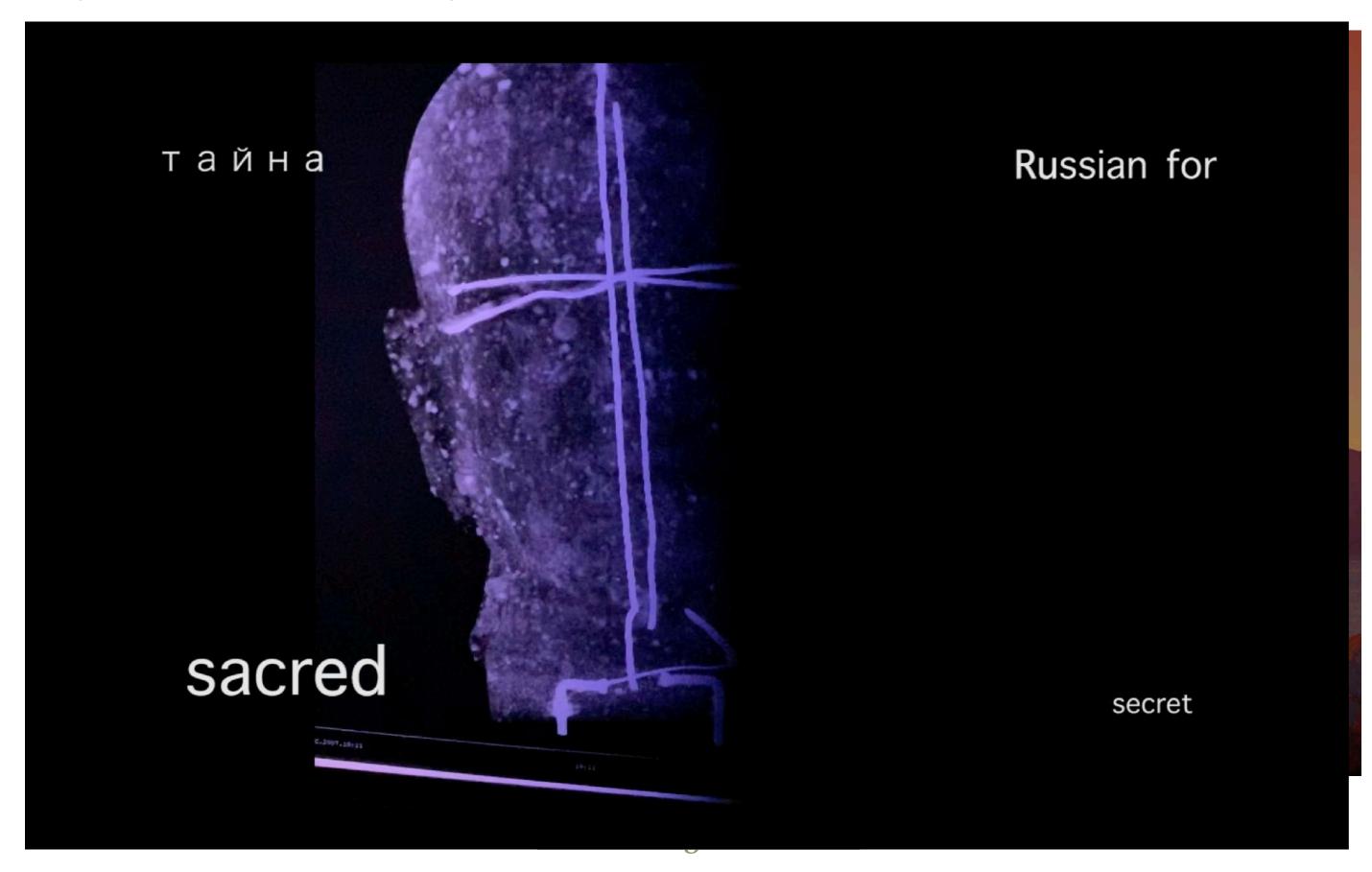
Born in Amsterdam in 1989, Devi Reed grew up in a dual culture thanks to his Dutch and Italian origins. Prior to performing solo, he has already gained extensive stage and studio experience as lead singer of the French reggae group *The Banyans*. Through this Toulousian sextet, he was able to distribute two albums nationally and also perform more than 400 concerts in more than 10 countries, including the biggest festivals in Europe (Reggae Sun Ska, Rototom Sun Splash, Ostroda). Reed infuses hip-hop with reggae and Cuban music in his practice. His music has no barrier, as his message, meant to travel around the world.



Beau T video in collaboration with Romy Engel 2020

Single channel video 03'46"

A video work, *Beau T*, part of *Le Secret Sacré* project, sees the collaboration between Levy-Lambert and Israeli video artist Romy Engel for a second time. The video documents the journey of discovery, and features important recorded dialogues between the artist and key actors of the story including the friend who gave the original gift and the technician who performed the CT scan of the sculpture.



Romy Engel Video editor

Engel is born and raised in Tel-Aviv, Israel, and graduated from Hadassah Academic College in Jerusalem. She now lives in Manhattan, New York, working as a video editing apprentice at a post-production house. Engel previously filmed and edited Levy-Lambert's acclaimed short film, *Evidence*, presented at the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco in 2016 and 2017.



Jayavarman VII Hospital in Siem Reap

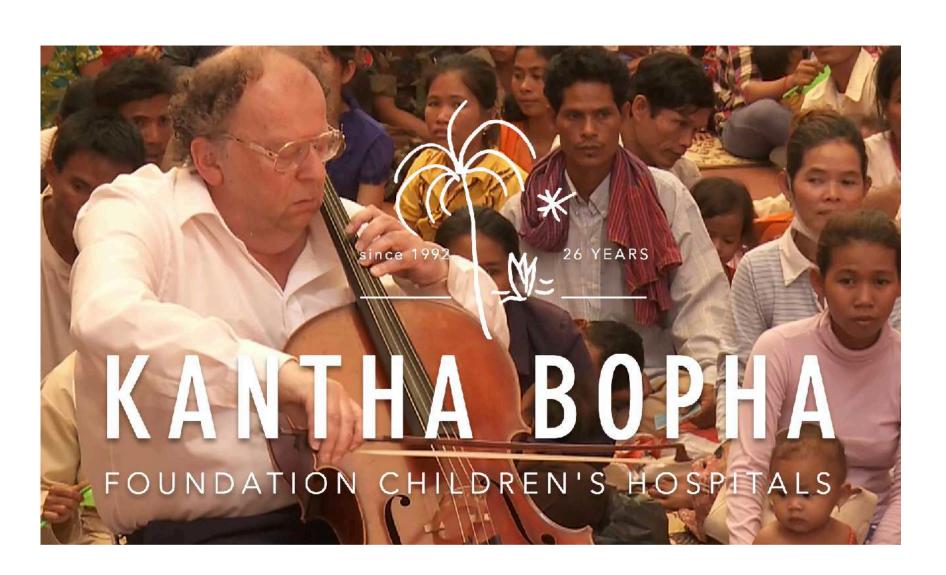
King Jayavarman VII was and is deeply respected, particularly for opening over a hundred hospitals during his reign (late 12th / early 13th CE). He famously said "the people's suffering is the king's suffering". To honour this history, the artist and gallery will donate a portion of the proceeds from the exhibition to benefit the Radiology Department of the Hospital Jayavarman VII Kantha Bopha Foundation in Siem Reap, where children receive treatment for free.



Kantha Bopha Foundation Children's Hospitals

From 1992 to 2007, Kantha Bopha founder Dr. med. Beat Richner opened five children's hospitals in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, Angkor. The Kantha Bopha hospitals take care of about 85% of all the sick children in Cambodia. 80% of the seriously ill and hospitalised children would not have a chance of survival without these hospitals as their families lack the financial means to pay for treatment.

Kantha Bopha Website



Artist CV

Born on the date depicted in Roy Lichtenstein's painting Desk Calendar

That same evening, Lag B'Omer 5722, the Lubavitcher Rebbe signs the preface of the first English translation of the Tanya

Summer 1968, the young future artist travels to Yugoslavia, setting the scene for his future feature film: *Nada* (work in progress)

July and August 1999: inception of *The Legend of Mark and Guillaume*, of *The Calendar Story* and of The MaGMA Collection

May 2007: Guillaume is told by Xavier Roux "you are an artist". He remains silent for a few seconds. The rest is history, and work in progress.

August to November 2008: MaGMA 0808, Eye of the Tiger featuring Nyoman Masriadi's My Body Not Big Enough is exhibited at the Singapore Art Museum

2009: MaGMA 1007, Self Portrait of the Collector by Another Artist, featuring David Chan's CEO of Categories is exhibited in Hybrid Society: Schizophrenia at Art Seasons Gallery.

March / April 2010: Fairy Tales — Selections from The MaGMA Collection in a curation by Wang Zineng and a scenography by Jean Francois Milou is presented at Opera Gallery, Singapore

2011: Guillaume inherits Leo Castelli's phone number

2012: the 2010 exhibition is turned into an iPad app of the same name with Guillaume's poems read by Ivan Heng and a music by Ian Chee

January 2014: *The Calendar Story* — *Collection MaGMA à Paris* in a curation by Pascal Payen-Appenzeller and a scenography by Jean Francois Milou is presented at Sotheby's Galerie Charpentier, Paris

November 2016 / June 2017: Guillaume's short film, *Evidence*, is presented at the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco

April 2017: Guillaume's TEDx Documenting Divine Providence is recorded live in Washington DC

January to March 2020: Le Secret Sacré, Art Porters Gallery, Singapore

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the many agents of Divine providence who contributed to this project. I am grateful to our curator Savita Apte, Devi Reed and Cam Ryon for the song, Givaudan, Carine Certain Boin and Hervé Fretay for the perfume, Marc Dicalou and Christophe Morgan for the gift that keeps giving, Romy Engel for the video, Olga Iserlis for the Russian translation, Simon Heah for the letter T and the Å, Florence Levy-Lambert for the graphic design, Olivier Varenne for the Christo, David Picard, Alexandra Domart, Johanna Monange, Elsa Lambinet, Ken Tong at Fujifilm, Lily Ng and colleagues at AVS, Nasmie Nekmat and his team at Arts in Mind and everyone at Art Porters.

Thank you BNP Paribas, and especially Joris Dierckx, for their support of this project.

Thank you to HRH Sisowath Tesso, to Master Yun Longzi and Kan Yin Loong of Lotus on Water, to Florence Fang and her colleagues at Flame Communications, as well as Ravindra Ngo. My appreciation to Can-Peter Meier and Abbeyfield Morgenstern, who push the boundaries of what is possible through the synergies of human and artificial intelligence

Thanks to the world of medical imagery — the anonymous team that unveiled the work on December 22, 2007, the developers of the Horos and Osirix softwares. A portion of proceeds from the exhibition will be gifted to the radiology department of Jayavarman VII children hospital in Siem Reap. Merci Benoît Duchateau-Arminjon for introducing me to Denis Laurent.

We are all Divine agents of providence. We can all transmit Divine gifts to each other. And be forever grateful.

The exhibition is dedicated to the memory of Christophe Pochart.

- Guillaume Levy-Lambert



Supported by:



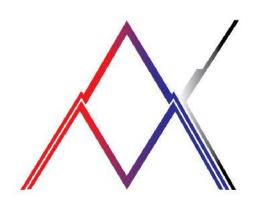
The bank for a changing world

To the benefit of:





Partners:



Givaudan

Organisers:







GALLERY INFO

Art Porters Gallery, 64 Spottiswoode Park Road, Singapore 088652

+65 6909 0468

Daily from 10.30am to 7.00pm (Mondays by appointment)

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