

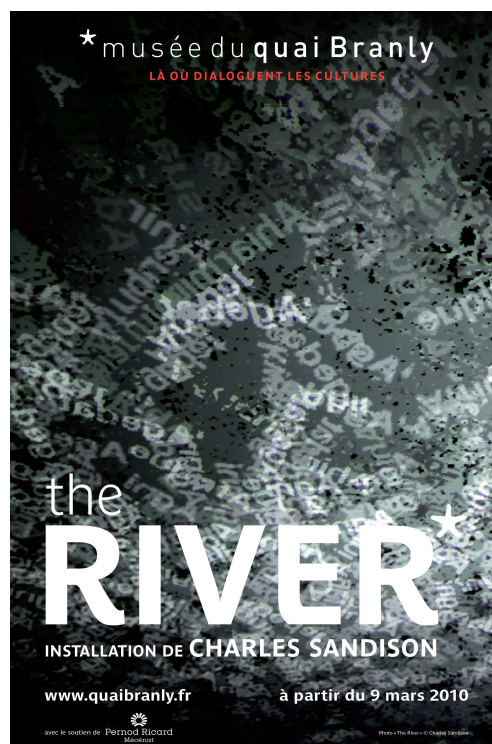


\*musée du quai Branly  
LÀ OÙ DIALOGUENT LES CULTURES

# THE RIVER

## Installation by CHARLES SANDISON

Installation on the Ramp leading to the collections area  
from 09/03/10



From 9<sup>th</sup> March 2010, the musée du quai Branly will be displaying a **new installation of contemporary art** for the public to explore, and this will be shown all the way along the ramp leading to the collections area.

**THE RIVER**, an installation by the artist **Charles Sandison** commissioned by the musée du quai Branly, is a **work of spectacular video art** which provides a truly sensorial and aesthetic experience.

Immersed in a **river of words that are moving**, generated by a network of computers, and projected at varying rhythms and densities for the whole length of the route, visitors will encounter **the names of all the peoples and geographic places represented** in the museum's collections. In this way, **THE RIVER** goes along with the flow of visitors as they ascend right to the source: the collections floor.

*... polynésie ravenna slavonska narabat miguel puno nek papantia creuse dogon  
rajbari nicolas pequetzen rapa pitcalm foukhar botswana pitcairn lipez putau  
rachaya magdalena santa oblysy sepik san luis piedras quijarro rangamati ...*

## \* THE RIVER, INSTALLATION BY CHARLES SANDISON

“ Rivers are the circulatory system of our planet, flowing from high ground to the oceans and seas. Water is vital as both sources for life and transportation of necessary elements.

We can think of language in similar way, as both medium and message. Ideas flow as words through time and space, momentarily manifesting themselves as events and objects briefly imbued with specific meaning. Like water this meaning gradually evaporates and merges back into the river of human life and death. We observe human history not in terms of specific meanings but in terms of the channels and canyons inscribed on the face of Our history, carved out by the flow of language.

A text projection generated by multiple computers connected to data projectors creates a river of information that flows up and down the main access ramp to the permanent collections. The computer program is executed in real-time creating constantly changing and evolving currents of text. The text interacts with itself increasing and decreasing the flow of data up and down the ramp. It represents a linguistic 'hydrologic cycle'.

The programs are written in the C++ language. Each computer is running its own individual copy of the program and communicating with the other computers via network creating a massive parallel processing whole. The system represents one of the more powerful clusters of computational power in central Paris, comparable with a cosmopolitan traffic control centre.

The mechanics of the software use a combination of artificial life and physics simulation techniques to combine language and the hydrological cycle. Computers allow us to examine seemingly unrelated concepts to discover convergent patterns. In this instance the museum architecture and presence of the visitor are catalysts, extending the physical permutations of the artwork.

The text used represents a vocabulary based on the derivation of the contents of the permanent collection, like a living thesaurus for the museum. The words emerge from the entrance at the top of the ramp as if the contents of the museum had dissolved into a liquid language that then drains from the collection.



© Charles Sandison

The extent of the projection is defined by the architecture of the ramp. There is a constant implicit dialogue between visitors to the museum and the artwork. As the visitor moves up the ramp the words flow under and around their feet as if they were paddling in a stream. At certain points the degree of immersion within the projection increases bathing the walker deeper in words.

By the time the viewer has climbed and descended the ramp they will have unconsciously encountered the entire literal content of the collection as it flowed around them. The journey from beginning to end inducts the visitor to the objects and ideas they will encounter in the space beyond.

The aim of the Work is to prepare the viewer to enter the collection, to create a state of reverie consistent with the architecture and the dream like experience of the permanent collection space.”

**Charles SANDISON**

## \* THE RIVER, A SPACE FOR EXCHANGE AND DIALOGUE

The artistic accompaniment of the access ramp to the collections floor entailed a compatibility with its structure, on the one hand – which has been inscribed in the genes of the museum since it opened -, and the founding principles of the museum on the other hand.

The art work of Charles Sandison was chosen, in particular, due to its coherence and its appropriateness in meeting the requirements of the architectural vision of the museum in terms of image, accessibility and identity.



© Charles Sandison

Taking the ramp from the entrance hall to the collections floor, visitors will come to the Glass Tower, where musical instruments are kept, and the area for temporary exhibitions: **visitors climb the ramp like you sail up a water course**, and find new spaces as the ramp bends round. Following Jean Nouvel's original idea of making a rivulet of water that would run along the ramp, THE RIVER is perfectly in line with the architecture of the museum and the architect's intentions.

It also extends La Rivière, the museographic route which is about 200 metres long meandering through the collections floor, equipped with nineteen video modules, bas-reliefs and inlaid texts for disabled visitors.

<<Presence-absence or selective dematerialization>> are key terms in the design of this place and of the museography choreographed by Jean Nouvel.

Sandison's art work fits in with the actual structure of the ramp, a long sine curve of one hundred and eighty metres. While they sculpt and reinvent the space, **trails of light take on the form of the surfaces that they encounter**, while playing on notions of the visible and the invisible, immateriality, **alternate construction and deconstruction, in the rhythm of the words which appear and combinations of texts which are created.**

The musée du quai Branly likes to see itself as a space of exchange and dialogue, which allows the mystery of the works of art to speak for itself, but also aims to enable understanding of all the complexity of the cultures from which they came by the intersection of viewpoints and ways of approaching them.

Yves Le Fur, director of the heritage department of the collections of the musée du quai Branly, and Charles Sandison have developed the text together to relate to the challenges posed by the museum: **the visitor, who becomes spectator, is invited to wander about among the 16,597 names of all the geographic places and peoples represented in the museum collections.** Generated by a computer program, the words, projected in black and white, move, individually or in groups, chase each other, organise themselves, push each other away, change, endlessly redrawing the frontiers of a territory where **relationships are continually renewed.**

Visitors can imagine whatever improbable relationships they like, allow themselves to be captivated by the strategic movement of these signs and reinterpret them.

This new installation meets the aspirations of the musée du quai Branly to provide a visible and permanent space for contemporary art. THE RIVER follows on from the multimedia installation *L'autre marche*, by Trin T. Minh-Ha, displayed on the ramp from June 2006 to June 2009.

## \* CHARLES SANDISON



**Charles Sandison** was born in Scotland in 1969. He lives, works and teaches in Finland, now. In 2009, his work *Cryptozoology* (2006) was projected in the Espace Culturel Louis Vuitton during the exhibition *Silent Writings*. In 2008, to mark the end of the French presidency of the Council of Europe, he showed his work *Manifesto, Proclamación Solemne*, a public-sector commission awarded in the setting of the exhibition *Dans la nuit, des images* where he projects extracts of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union onto the facade of the Grand Palais. The same year he brought in the *Nymphéas bleus*, to the musée d'Orsay in the area around the *Correspondances* exhibition. He also participated in the Shanghai Biennale in 2006, exhibited at the Centre for Contemporary Images in Geneva and at the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki and also a great many collective or individual exhibitions worldwide. A wide range of people discovered his art when he participated in the Venice Biennale in 2001.

**Galerie Yvon Lambert:** Yvon Lambert has been representing Charles Sandison since 2007. In January and February 2010, Sandison's second exhibition in Paris was held, *Writing with Light*.

## \* THE SPACE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART AT THE MUSEE DU QUAI BRANLY

The musée du quai Branly is pledged to the heritage of European artists and anthropologists, who are brought together behind the manifesto of Jacques Kerchache, **"The works of art of the whole world are born free and equal"**. Following this line of thought, the recognition of non-European cultures, the museum maintains a **conspicuous and permanent space for contemporary art**.

This commitment is visible in the first place on the **collections floor**. The permanent museography provides an unusual space, for example, for the recent development of Australian Aborigine art. This creation also forms an integral part of the architecture of the museum, with **the painted ceilings in the Rue de l'Université and of the bookshop** on which eight aboriginal artists have worked: Paddy Nyunkuny Bedford, John Mawurndjul, Ningura Napurrula, Lena Nyadbi, Michael Riley, Judy Watson, Tommy Watson and Gulumbu Yunupingu.



On the left: Lourdes Grobet. Extract from *Fluxus* © Lourdes Grobet, musée du quai Branly, 2008

On the right : Wu Qi : « Dans l'intimité des catholiques chinois » © Wu Qi, musée du quai Branly, 2008

**In 2008, the museum du quai Branly set up the artistic creation projects, an original programme to promote artistic creation established over 3 years.** This programme enables one or many non-western contemporary photographers to complete a residence in the country of their choice. What is at stake in the projects is most often artistic, beyond documentary or ethnographical considerations.

The photographers selected: **Lourdes Grobet** (Mexico) – **Wu Qi** (China) – **Sammy Baloji** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) – **Pablo Bartholomew** (India) – **Wayne Liu** (Taiwan).

The photographic prints selected are displayed in the garden of the musée du quai Branly.

Since the opening of the musée du quai Branly in June 2006, many **temporary exhibitions** give an important place to contemporary creativity:

\* With Romuald Hazoumé and *La bouche du roi*, shown in autumn 2006, the museum welcomed its first contemporary installation by an artist who would receive **the great Arnold Bode prize of La Documenta de Kassel**, 2007 edition, a major event of contemporary art.

\* *Garden of Love*, an exhibition designed by the London artist Yinka Shonibare MBE, and displayed in the Garden gallery from 3<sup>rd</sup> April to 8<sup>th</sup> July 2007.

\* *Diaspora*, an exhibition dedicated to a collective of contemporary artists, brought together by the film director **Claire Denis** from 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2007 to 6<sup>th</sup> January 2008.

\* The setting up of the exhibition *“Upside Down”, les Arctiques* displayed from 30<sup>th</sup> September 2008 to 11<sup>th</sup> January 2009, was entrusted to the visual artist of the *Light and Space* movement, **Doug Wheeler**, a scenographic artist, he uses light and space to re-create **luminosity, darkness and the complete vastness of the Arctic** by film projections, the play of shadows and variations of temperature in order to disorientate the visitor and so induce a state of total receptivity to the items exhibited.

\* The musée du quai Branly is organising the **3<sup>rd</sup> Biennial of Images of the World: Photoquai, a contemporary photography Festival on an international scale**, it aims to reveal to the public, as much to amateur and collector as professional, **new talent throughout the world today**.

**In this continuum, the artistic installation THE RIVER in its turn, provides the opportunity to encounter, in France, the work of an internationally renowned contemporary artist.**

## \* PERNOD RICARD, PATRON OF THE RIVER

As soon as 2004, Pernod Ricard became the first “Great Corporate Patron” of the musée du quai Branly. This partnership conveys a valued message by a Group represented through 70 subsidiaries all over the world: respect for cultures and for distinctive local features in each of its locations.

Following the completion of the ponds on the Museum’s terraces, a prestigious project arranged by the architect Jean Nouvel, Pernod Ricard has now chosen to support the video artwork of the artist Charles Sandison, who thanks to his installation, THE RIVER, has made his the museum’s main access ramp. As a strong indicator of the *ongoing* commitment of the Group alongside the musée du quai Branly, this new initiative draws its entire meaning from the creative wave sprayed out by the artist by combining languages and technology, in a river of words guiding the flow of visitors as they ascend to the source: the collections’ area.

This contemporary art installation mixing the diversity of languages and cultures decisively embodies the values inscribed at the core of the Pernod Ricard world: the respect for origins, exchange and geniality, and contemporary creativity.

*The River, artwork by Charles Sandison,  
has been produced thanks to the support of*



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