

For immediate release:

Ulisse

A project by Marc Ohrem-Leclef

Curated by Allen Frame

April 4 - May 31

Deutsches Haus at NYU

42 Washington Mews, New York, NY 10003

May 8, 6pm:

Artist Talk with Allen Frame, moderated by Juliane Camfield (Deutsches Haus).



Deutsches Haus at NYU presents Marc Ohrem-Leclef's inaugural exhibition of the ongoing project "Ulisse", curated by Allen Frame. Working with found materials dating back to the 1940s, with vernacular images and his original photographs, Ohrem-Leclef follows the migratory footpaths of collaborators, roads, ships, pieces of mail, and—most viscerally—the pull of the water. From North Africa, Europe, Australia and America these pathways share a quest for belonging, driven by the push and pull of desire and memory: the desire to fulfill dreams and the memory of the people and places left behind.

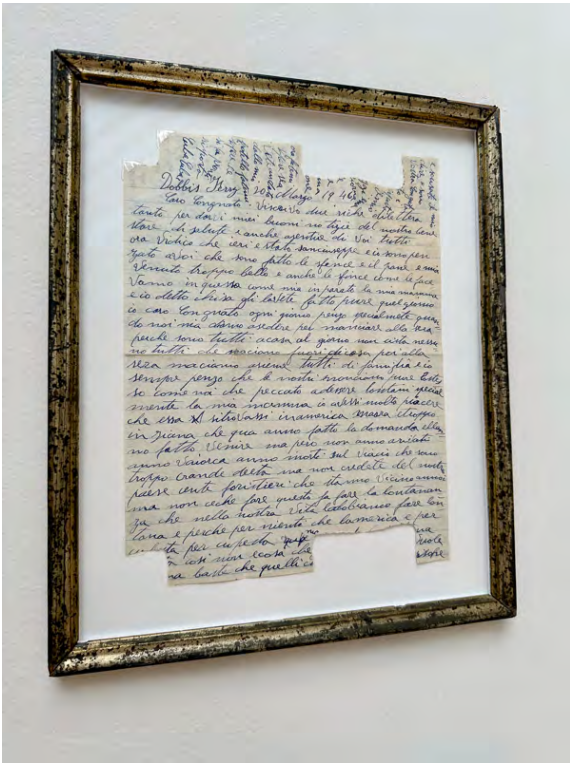
Deutsches Haus at NYU hours: Mon-Thur 10am - 8pm / Fri 10am - 6pm / Sat 10am-1pm

To schedule your visit please email sarah.girner@nyu.edu

To contact the artist please email marcleclef.studio@gmail.com



Installation views, Deutsches Haus at NYU, April 2024



Installation views, Deutsches Haus at NYU, April 2024

Curator statement:

Ulisse

A project by Marc Ohrem-Leclef

Marc Ohrem-Leclef was 21, vacationing in Lipari from Germany when he met Ulisse, an Italian youth who was with a group of his friends from Bologna. Marc joined them on a boat ride and took pictures but was shy about photographing Ulisse himself, his new infatuation, except for the one picture we have from the back, a closeup of his head, neck, and shoulders: it is smoldering, evidence of an undeclared summer love.

Marc moves to New York, and his world opens up. He finds himself, he finds love, he pursues photography, but something calls him back, after many years, to Lipari, in the Aeolian Islands of Sicily, and this time he meets two brothers, Zouhair and Fakher, local vendors of Moroccan descent, renting beach umbrellas and air mattresses for the rocky beach. He photographs them at work, and with their cousin, diving off cliffs into the Tyrrhenian Sea. The ferry taking passengers among the islands is called Ulisse.

On his first trip to Lipari, Marc discovers an abandoned house and letters from the 1940s, sent by a woman named Caterina Liberatore in Dobbs Ferry, New York. She misses her family, longs to see them. On his recent return, Marc explores the island again, visits the quarries. Lipari is famous for centuries of pumice mining, shut down in 2007.

He photographs a Christ figure in a church niche, a big curtain blown over his shoulder, as if to keep him warm. He brings home a chunk of obsidian, part of the volcanic flow, also once mined in Lipari. Back in New York, he visits Dobbs Ferry, in search of Caterina, but the family has long since moved on. Still, he befriends a young woman named Karen watching birds by the Hudson, and now he sends postcards to Zouhair and Fakher, who have moved to Australia and are working in its mines.

The photographs and ephemera Marc has collected here are a personal, poetic log of random and fateful occurrences, suggesting stories of desire and migration. The threads between them are tenuous, spanning years and geographies of overlapping quests. Piecing them together is an act of faith.

- Allen Frame

Artist statement:

Ulisse

A project by Marc Ohrem-Leclef

(1940s/2018-ongoing; found documents, vernacular images, original photographs)

I have never met Caterina Liberatore. In the summer of 1992, at age twenty-one and about to study photography in Germany, I found her letters, along with some black and white photographs, strewn across the floor of an abandoned home on Lipari, one of the Eolian Islands in Sicily. Damaged by rain, but clearly precious, I gathered a few and took them with me.

I continued to roam around the island's volcanic landscapes, camera in hand, enjoying a new kind of freedom on my rented Vespa. Soon after my find, I befriended a group of Italians from Bologna. Among them was Ulisse, with whom I fell quietly in love—my first time.

Over the next twenty years, I became a photographer, moved to New York, and lost touch with the “ragazzi di Bologna”. But I continued to spend time on the Eolian Islands. During the summer of 2018, I befriended two young men, Fakher and Zouhair, who worked on the beach below the cottage I rented on Salina. At sunset, after work, they'd climb the tall rocks flanking the beach and dive into the Mediterranean from high above. Stromboli's eruptions were faintly visible in the distance. We started making photographs during these brief moments of freedom and joy.

When I look at these photos, I relive the thrill of their leaps and hear their laughter upon surfacing. But I also contemplate the mortal danger these waters represent for so many on their journey from North Africa to Europe. Those rocks we climbed together become metaphors: as both a place of refuge and as insurmountable barriers.

A year after we met, Fakher and Zouhair left Salina to look for work in Australia. Their departure inspired me to rediscover Caterina's letters. Reading about her longing to sit for a meal with her family back home on the island transports me to the emotions I felt during my early days in New York.

Caterina's letters eventually led me to a beach on the Hudson River, steps from the house in Dobbs Ferry where she wrote them in the 1940s. Here, as the afternoon sun danced on the

river's surface, I met Karen. I shared my journey with her, and a new collaboration by the water developed, echoing my work with Fakher and Zouhair.

In *Ulisse*, I follow the lines of footpaths, roads, boats, pieces of mail, and—most viscerally—the pull of the water, on an unspoken journey of discovery and of memory. Traversing geographies and decades, our stories might seem unrelated. Yet, these pathways share a deep-seated quest for belonging, driven by the push and pull of desire and memory: the desire to become a truer version of ourselves and the memory of the people and places we've left behind.

Subverting the role of the photograph as a means of memory-keeping, in *Ulisse* the photographs act as stand-ins for *a kind of memory*: the only photograph of Ulisse does not reveal his face; against the midday sun, he leans on the railing of a boat. The silhouette of his back against the Mediterranean suggests a kind of longing that transcends my affection for him, the kind of longing that drew me across the Atlantic to the piers on Manhattan's West Side, where queerness was omnipresent and alive.

The deep-seated desires that propel us to seek an opportunity, a new home, distance from a fractured family, a temporary respite from daily life, freedom—some version of these longings is known to most of us. *Ulisse* offers up different paths to access this reckoning within ourselves, and to empathize/identify with those who fight—and struggle—to pursue their dreams.

About the artist:

Marc Ohrem-Leclef (German, based in Brooklyn) is a lens-based artist who explores themes of identity and belonging, in particular where their mainstream representations perpetuate inequalities. His collaborative practice manifests in long-term projects, employing documentary and performative modes.

In Olympic Favela (2012-2016, photography/audio/video) he collaborated with residents of Rio de Janeiro's favela communities, incorporating interventional gestures to visualize their resistance against forced evictions from their homes ahead of the 2016 Olympic Games. The monograph Olympic Favela was published in 2014 (Damiani), and the short documentary film premiered at the 2016 Seattle Intl. Film Festival.

Current projects include Zameen Aasman Ka Farq ("As far apart as the Earth is for the Sky") (2017-ongoing; photography/texts/video) which explores the politics of touch between men in India.

A MacDowell fellow and Finalist in the Aperture Portfolio Prize 2022, Ohrem-Leclef's work has received numerous awards; it is held in the collection of Museo de Arte do Rio (Brazil) and the Metropolitan Museum of Art Library (N.Y.), and has been exhibited and screened internationally. Select publications and reviews include Artforum, British Journal of Photography, The Atlantic, Der Spiegel, M - LeMonde, Slate, Out.

Ohrem-Leclef teaches at the International Center of Photography (ICP) and lectured at Columbia University, New School, CUNY, School of Visual Arts, SUNY, Pratt Institute, amongst others.

About the curator:

Allen Frame is a photographer and writer, based in New York and represented by Gitterman Gallery. He has released four books of photography: Whereupon (Palermo Publishing, 2023); Innamorato (Meteoro Editions, 2023); Fever, (Matte Editions, 2021); and Detour, (Kehrer, 2001). Currently, his work appears in the exhibition Mexichrome at the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City. His two-person exhibition Lost and Found was presented at Soft Network in New York, in November. He is a winner of the 2017/2018 Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome and CEC Artslink's Back Apartment Residency in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 2019. He has curated numerous exhibitions, including Luxe, Calme, Volupte, which he co-curated with Sergio Bessa at Candice Madey Gallery in 2023. He is an Adjunct Professor of Photography at Pratt Institute (MFA) and also teaches at the School of Visual Arts (BFA), the International Center of Photography in New York, and for Strudelmedialive.

Artist website:

<https://marclelef.net/projects/ulyse/>

Exhibition details :

<https://as.nyu.edu/research-centers/deutscheshaus/cultural-program/events/spring-2024/exhibition-opening--marc-ohrem-leclef-s--ulisse-.html>

Artwork Checklist:

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/9tzrnrh3pldg510eim2w6/Ulisse-Checklist_DH-NYU-04-2024-N.pdf?rlkey=i0xj9d9cbbp34ejomm1wttt1e&dl=0