



François-Xavier Gbré
Radio Ballast

—

Sibylle Bergemann
The Monument

Press opening of the exhibitions

Tuesday, October 28, 2025 2 PM – 4 PM

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From Tuesday to Sunday: 11 AM – 7 PM
Full rate 10 € / Reduced rate 6 €

François-Xavier Gbré is drawn to traces. For the past fifteen years or so, he has been photographing the imprints of human activity on the landscape and architecture of the African continent. In 2023, as part of the Latitudes support program developed by the Fondation d'entreprise Hermès, he set out to follow the railway that runs from north to south through Côte d'Ivoire. The line was built during the French colonial era to extract the country's natural resources and transport them to the port of Abidjan, then on to the metropole. Gbré's photographs are infused with a kind of latent historicity made up of multiple overlapping temporal layers: the colonial period, the post-Independence years, and more recent events.

Radio Ballast is the title of the project. *Radio* refers to the device that transmits information, while *ballast* is the bed of crushed rock on which the rails lie. In railway jargon, the term also refers to rumors of uncertain origin: vague, unfounded news, a mixture of assumptions and gossip, interwoven and often contradictory narratives. It's easier to imagine that such rumors come from the tracks themselves. History often resembles such a rumor. It is never simple, but rather diverse, entangled, or refracted. It falls to the artist to propose forms of synthesis. That is precisely what François-Xavier Gbré sought to represent here.

Curator of the exhibition

Clément Chéroux

Director, Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson

THE EXHIBITION

Franco-Ivorian photographer François-Xavier Gbré is the winner of the first edition of the Fondation d'entreprise Hermès' Latitudes program, mentored by Clément Chéroux, director of the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson. After its presentation at the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Radio Ballast* will travel, in 2026, to the International Center of Photography (ICP) in New York City, USA, and later to Côte d'Ivoire.

THE LATITUDES PROGRAM

Inaugurated in 2024, Latitudes is a Fondation d'entreprise Hermès program developed in partnership with the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson in Paris and the International Center of Photography (ICP) in New York.

It broadens the scope of Immersion, the former French-American photography commission launched in 2014 with the same partners, a cross-residency between France and the United States.

The new program supporting contemporary creation takes its name from a geographical concept, affirming its ambition to shed light on artists from scenes that are still underrepresented on the international stage. In practice, the Fondation d'entreprise Hermès, the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson and the ICP select a country from which photographers are invited to submit a project. A jury composed of representatives from the three institutions selects the annual winner.

The chosen photographer receives a grant to produce a new series. The resulting work is exhibited first in Paris at the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, then in New York at the ICP, and finally in the winner's home country.

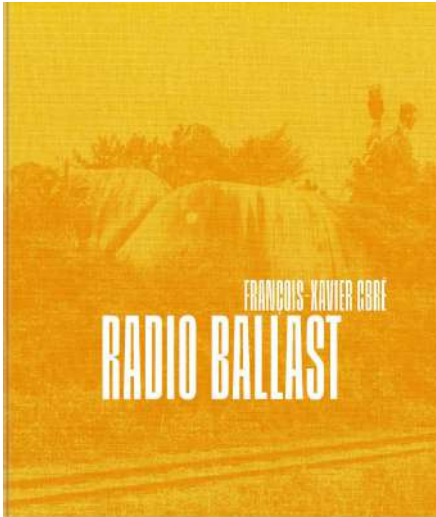
Côte d'Ivoire is the first country to be honored in the two-year cycle inaugurated in 2024.





François-Xavier Gbré, from the series « Radio Ballast », *Rubino #2*, 2024
© François-Xavier Gbré, Adagp, Paris, 2025

PUBLICATION



François-Xavier Gbré — *Radio Ballast*

Publishers: Atelier EXB and Fondation d'entreprise Hermès

Texts: Clément Chéroux, Sandrine Colard and Gauz'

Available in French or English.

Hardcover

22 x 26,3 cm

104 pages

October 2025

ISBN : 978-2-36511-459-2

45 €

BIOGRAPHY

Born in 1978 in Lille, France. François-Xavier Gbré lives and works between La Rochelle (France) and Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire).

Steeped in time and geography, Gbré's work draws on the language of architecture as a witness to memory and social change. From colonial remains to landscapes redefined by current events, Gbré explores territories and revisits History. The constant dialogue with his environment leads him to use different scales and exhibition methods, whether crafting meticulous installations based on thorough investigations of the land, or using architecture itself to make photography resonate through a physical relationship with the viewer or the public space.

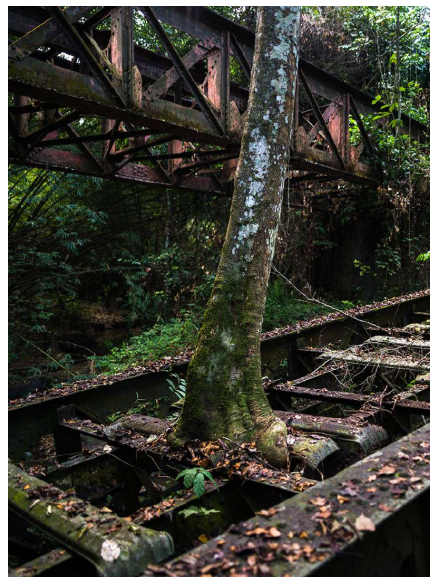
His work has been shown in Paris and Abidjan at the Cécile Fakhoury Gallery, which represents him, at the Dakar Biennale in Senegal, the Venice Biennale in Italy, in Madagascar, Nigeria, the United States, and various European countries.

His works are included, among others, in the collections of the Centre Pompidou (Paris, France), the Smithsonian Institution (Washington, USA), Tate Modern (London, UK), the Museum of Modern Art (New York, USA), the Walther Collection (Neu-Ulm, Germany – New York, USA), the Philadelphia Museum of Art (USA), the Collection of the Rencontres de la photographie d'Arles (France), and the FNAC – Fonds National d'Art Contemporain (France).

In 2020, François-Xavier Gbré was awarded the Louis Roederer Discovery Award at the Rencontres de la photographie d'Arles. In 2024, he becomes the first laureate of the Fondation d'entreprise Hermès Latitudes program.



01
François-Xavier Gbré, from the series « Radio Ballast », *Agnéby, Agboville*, 2024
© François-Xavier Gbré, Adagp, Paris, 2025



02
François-Xavier Gbré, from the series « Radio Ballast », *Rubino #2*, 2024
© François-Xavier Gbré, Adagp, Paris, 2025



03
François-Xavier Gbré, from the series « Radio Ballast », *Rubino #1*, 2024
© François-Xavier Gbré, Adagp, Paris, 2025



04
François-Xavier Gbré, from the series « Radio Ballast », *Salon VIP, gare de Bouaké*, 2024 © François-Xavier Gbré, Adagp, Paris, 2025



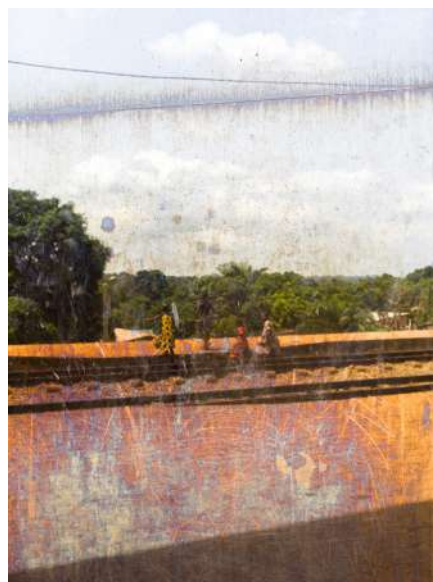
05
François-Xavier Gbré, from the series « Radio Ballast »,
Gare de Bouaké, 2024
© François-Xavier Gbré, Adagp, Paris, 2025



06
François-Xavier Gbré, from the series « Radio Ballast »,
Gare de Bouaké, 2024
© François-Xavier Gbré, Adagp, Paris, 2025



07
François-Xavier Gbré, from the series « Radio Ballast »,
Dépôt, Abidjan, 2024
© François-Xavier Gbré, Adagp, Paris, 2025



08
François-Xavier Gbré, from the series « Radio Ballast »,
Katiola, 2024
© François-Xavier Gbré, Adagp, Paris, 2025



09
François-Xavier Gbré, from the series « Radio Ballast », *Dimbokro*, 2024
© François-Xavier Gbré, Adagp, Paris, 2025



10
François-Xavier Gbré, from the series « Radio Ballast », *Bamoro*, 2024
© François-Xavier Gbré, Adagp, Paris, 2025



11
François-Xavier Gbré, from the series « Radio Ballast », *Gare de Nda Kouassikro*, 2024
© François-Xavier Gbré, Adagp, Paris, 2025



12
François-Xavier Gbré, from the series « Radio Ballast », *Étude de train*, 2024
© François-Xavier Gbré, Adagp, Paris, 2025

From 1975 to 1986, German photographer Sibylle Bergemann documented the creation of the Marx and Engels monument in East Berlin. The project, conceived in the aftermath of World War II and the founding of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), was ultimately entrusted in 1973 to the sculptor Ludwig Engelhardt, who allied himself with several other artists.

Bergemann began photographing informally, before receiving an official commission from the Ministry of Culture in 1977. Over the course of eleven years, she captured each stage of the process, from the earliest models to the monument's inauguration on April 4, 1986.

Despite the publication of some images in the press as early as 1983 and their presentation in an official exhibition, it was only once the commission was completed that Bergemann fully reclaimed the body of work. Out of more than 400 developed rolls of film, she selected twelve photographs, which she brought together under the title *Das Denkmal* (The Monument). These images reveal a visual language far removed from official aesthetics. In a post-communist light, their deconstruction of heroic figures and underlying irony seem strikingly prescient. Yet no one could have foreseen the fall of the Berlin Wall just two years later. With rigorous objectivity, Bergemann managed to avoid censorship while delivering a stark and laconic portrayal of an ideology's obsolescence.

In 1990, the publication of a book pairing Bergemann's photographs with poems by Heiner Müller helped establish *The Monument* as an artistic landmark in this singular moment of German history. It remains today one of Bergemann's most iconic series, and a defining piece of the artistic production of that era.

Curator of the exhibition

Sonia Voss
Independent curator

Production

This exhibition is produced by the Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, in collaboration with the Centre régional de la photographie Hauts-de-France (CRP) and with the participation of the Estate Sibylle Bergemann.

CRP/ CENTRE RÉGIONAL
DE LA PHOTOGRAPHIE
HAUTS-DE-FRANCE

BIOGRAPHY

Born in Berlin in 1941, Sibylle Bergemann grew up in postwar Germany and later in the newly founded German Democratic Republic (GDR). After training in office administration, she joined the editorial team of *Das Magazin* in 1965. There, she met photographer Arno Fischer, who introduced her to photography and later became her husband.

From 1967 onwards, her photographs were regularly published in the weekly *Sonntag* and later in the magazine *Sibylle*, where she left a lasting mark on the editorial line with her defiant and subtly critical visual language. Alongside fashion photography, she produced portraits and numerous photo-reportages.

The city of Berlin, captured by her both before and after 1989 in all its moods and transformations, remained one of her favorite subjects. Between 1975 and 1986, Bergemann documented the creation of the Marx and Engels monument in East Berlin, resulting in her renowned series *Das Denkmal* (The Monument).

In 1990, shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall, she co-founded the photography agency OSTKREUZ. Commissions from *Stern*, *Geo*, and *The New York Times* finally gave her the freedom to travel the world. She was appointed a member of the Berlin Academy of Arts in 1994.

Sibylle Bergemann passed away in Gransee, Germany, in 2010.

PUBLICATION



The Monument brings together for the first time Sibylle Bergemann's complete photographic series documenting the creation of the monument to Marx and Engels in East Berlin. This publication presents numerous previously unpublished photographs and opens up a new perspective on one of the photographer's most important body of work.

This long-term documentary project—produced between 1975 and 1986—is presented not only as a gripping photographic narrative, but is also considered, through the accompanying essays, in its historical, socio-political and aesthetic contexts.

The Monument thus offers an in-depth understanding of the series' creative process, while making an essential contribution to the critical re-reading of its significance and reception, at the crossroads of art and ideology.

Sibylle Bergemann — *The Monument*

Publisher: Kerber

Editors: Sonia Voss, Frieda von Wild, Lily von Wild

Texts: Christian Joschke, Heiner Müller, Steffen Siegel,
Sonia Voss, Frieda von Wild, Lily von Wild

Available in three versions: German, French, and English

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192 pages

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45 €

BIOGRAPHY

Sonia Voss is an exhibition curator. Among other projects, she presented *Restless Bodies. East German Photography 1980–89* at the Rencontres d'Arles in 2019 and has edited several publications related to this scene. Since then, she has extended her research to other Eastern European territories, particularly Lithuania in the 1970s and 1980s. She also accompanies contemporary artists such as Isabelle Le Minh and Tarrah Krajnak, and occasionally delves into archives—most recently those of Kusakazu Uraguchi, whose work she brought to public attention in 2024 with the exhibition *Ama* and the monograph *Shima no ama* (Atelier EXB).



01
Sibylle Bergemann, *Das Denkmal* [The Monument], Gummlin, Usedom,
May 1984 © Estate Sibylle Bergemann



02
Sibylle Bergemann, *Das Denkmal* [The Monument], Gummlin, Usedom,
July 1985 © Estate Sibylle Bergemann



03
Sibylle Bergemann, *Das Denkmal* [The Monument], Gummlin, Usedom,
Spring 1976 © Estate Sibylle Bergemann



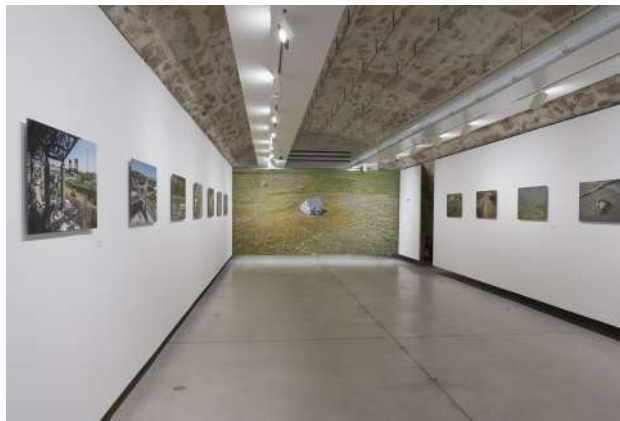
04
Sibylle Bergemann, *Das Denkmal* [The Monument], East Berlin,
February 1986 © Estate Sibylle Bergemann



01
Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, 79 rue des Archives, Paris, November 2018
© Cyrille Weiner



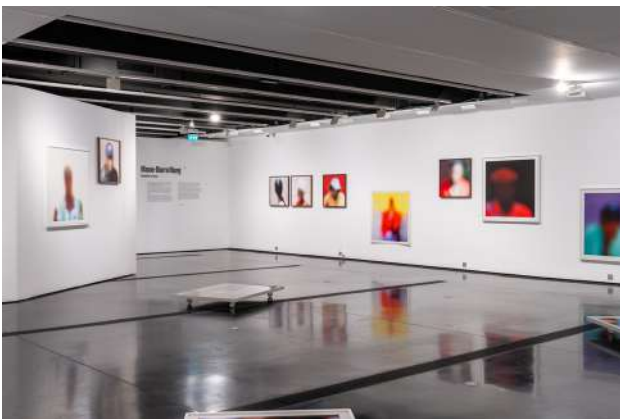
02
Entrance and bookstore
Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, 79 rue des Archives, Paris, June 2024
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03
Stephen Shore - *Véhiculaire & Vernaculaire* exhibition
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04
Vasantha Yogananthan - *Mystery Street* exhibition
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05
Mame-Diarra Niang - *Remember to Forget* exhibition
Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, 79 rue des Archives, Paris, October 2024
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06
Ruth Orkin - *Bike Trip, USA, 1939* exhibition
Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, 79 rue des Archives, Paris, September 2023
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