



Pierre Creton | Still Life Primavera (2025). courtesy of Salle Principale gallery, Paris

PRESS

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Pierre CRETON | Still Life Primavera (2025)

MoMA | Doc Fortnight 2026

MoMA's Festival of International Nonfiction Film and Media Feb 26–Mar 11, 2026

MoMA

11 West 53 Street, Manhattan New York, New York, 10019

Doc Fortnight Shorts 2: Sight Lines

Saturday, March 7 4:30 PM

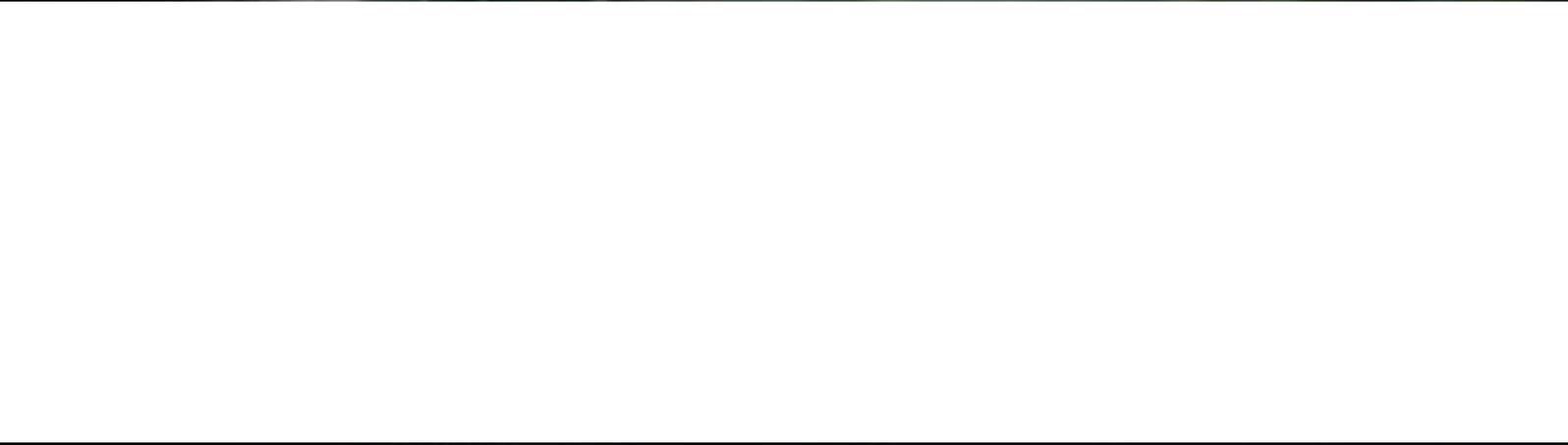
Monday, March 9 4:30 PM

<https://www.moma.org/calendar/events/11247>

<https://www.moma.org/calendar/film/5881>

Courtesy Salle Principale gallery, Paris, France

The Museum of Modern Art announces the lineup for *Doc Fortnight 2026*, the 25th anniversary edition of its annual festival celebrating trailblazing new documentary cinema from around the world. Running from February 26 to March 12, *Doc Fortnight 2026* will present 14 features and 19 short and medium-length films from 23 countries in the Museum's Roy and Niuta Titus Theaters. The program celebrates new work by Ross McElwee, Anocha Suwichakornpong, Sky Hopinka, James Benning, Maureen Fazendeiro, Federico Veiroj, Bani Khoshnoudi, Kavich Neang, **Pierre Creton**, and many others, alongside exciting debuts by emerging filmmakers such as Chunni Lin and Pang-Chuan Huang, Peter Treherne, and Charlotte Zhang.



Still Life Primavera

Pierre Creton

France, 2025, Color, 24'

Director

Pierre Creton

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Script: Pierre Creton

Photography: Pierre Creton

Editing: Pierre Creton

Sound: Pierre Creton

Production: Pierre Creton (MAISON LAMBERT)

Courtesy Salle Principale gallery, Paris, France

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"Spring equinox 2024: 20 March at three hours, six minutes, twenty-one seconds (GMT). Vattetot-sur-Mer, in the Pays de Caux region of Normandy. Gaza is being bombed" (Pierre Creton). In *Still Life Primavera*, a window is a membrane between those who watch and life outside. A candle illuminates the stillness and the image remains suspended in a whispering prayer.

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Communication with the dead, apparitions/disappearances, and other supernatural events: since *L'Heure du Berger* (2007) through to *House of Love* (2021), Pierre Creton has continually turned the interior of his home into a fantastical device. In *Still Life Primavera*, this device is reduced to a single closed window looking out onto the garden. It is 21 March, the spring equinox, in Vattetot-sur-Mer. While nature awakens outside, Gaza is dying under the bombs. How can one be present here without forgetting what is happening over there? To hold together the here and the elsewhere, the filmmaker has assumed the role of officiant in a solitary ritual: each hour, for 24 hours, he records a one-minute shot, the camera fixed before the window. During the 12 hours of night, at the beginning and end of the film, the window becomes a dark mirror reflecting the flame of a lit candle: a solitary vigil for the people of Gaza. During the 12 hours of daylight, a dog, a donkey, a cat, a blackbird—animals appear and disappear in all innocence in a garden that could be mistaken for paradise. But at the back of the garden, an upright column echoes the candle: the vigil continues. The window becomes an altarpiece that, far beyond the garden, opens onto the distant disaster. When night returns and images of the catastrophe appear on a laptop

screen placed before the window, a hand presses its black silhouette against it. We had seen it earlier, holding between two fingers a white primrose, caught between the window and the camera. _ Cyril Neyrat*

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Interview by Cyril Neyrat*

Pierre Creton

Still Life Primavera is part of the long line of your films made in your house in Vattetot-sur-Mer. It stands out through the choice of a single frame, with 24 variations unfolding over 24 minutes. What was the origin of this film? What led you to this form, this protocol?

On 27 February 2024, like many other filmmakers and artists, I received a message from Narimane Mari inviting me to make a cinematic gesture rooted in Palestine—something that would bear witness to what is blotted out on the screens of History, when thousands of lives are targeted by Israeli airstrikes, forbidden from living on their land. But how, from so far away, can we share in the fear of death? How can one resist the world's greatest misfortunes from one's own garden? I contributed to Narimane's series of filmic gestures, titled *Some Strings*, with a four-minute *Ex-voto for Gaza*. I wanted to extend that gesture into something 24 minutes long.

I imagined an action where I would move as little as possible. I filmed one minute per hour, for twenty-four hours (without sleeping), on the first day of spring, never once moving the camera from its position.

The setup centres mainly on a window looking out onto the garden. In daylight, different things occur on the far side of the glass: animals appear, light and colour shift with the changing atmosphere. But in darkness, the window becomes a mirror, reflecting things from inside the house. Can you comment on this double aspect of the window, and of the film?

The garden always more or less evokes paradise, with its tame nature and domestic animals; yet the radio and newspapers constantly remind us that hell is not far away.

While filming, I had a better idea of what might happen outside than inside (although the sea mist still surprised me). It's an empirical film, an experimental film—made blindly. I hadn't anticipated all the reflections on the window at night. I had never noticed, for instance, that reflections could layer upon one another, like natural superimpositions.

Still Life Primavera: a double title, a composite title, which you display split in two at the start of the film. It evokes many associations, but what stands out is a stark contrast between its two parts: *Still Life/Primavera*. Could you comment?

A *silent* nature of spring and of death.

Though the film never leaves the house, the violence of the world—that of Gaza—reaches it. It does so very indirectly: a computer screen in the night. We see little; we guess, we recognise. Why this mode of appearance?

It seemed to me that this very indirect approach—through reflection and through the night—gave the impression, the superimpression, that the violence came from our deepest, most anxiety-ridden night.

Why does that hand appear, placing itself on the screen, its silhouette outlined?

It was a spontaneous, unplanned gesture. I hadn't thought of it. My hand was drawn to the image, as if magnetised. As if it could stop the war.

Still Life—silent life. In terms of sound, the film is dominated by a silence that seems to be one of solitude—including the sound of the washing machine—but also of contemplation. Yet the film opens and closes with music, the source of which you reveal in the credits: *Eyeless in Gaza*. How did you work with sound in the film? Is all the sound direct?

Amid the wonder of spring—which plants, animals and humans all enjoy—bombs fall in the distance and echo inside the head. No real silence, no rest! The British band *Eyeless in Gaza* appeared in the 1980s, and I've never stopped listening to them. In the film, you hear them like fragments of a refrain—one from my own story, which crosses through History. Sound, music, silence and noise (those everyday sounds that escape us)—I worked on them on the same level as the image, at the same time, in the same immobile gesture of contemplation.

*Cyril Neyrat is the artistic director of FIDMarseille. He is a film critic, notably for *Cahiers du cinéma* and *Vertigo* magazine, a teacher (at HEAD-Geneva, among others), an associate editor at *Éditions de l'œil* (Pedro Costa. *Matériaux*, with Luc Chessel (ed.), 2022), he was a resident at the French Academy in Rome (Villa Medici) in 2009-2010. He has also worked as a permanent staff member in a residential facility for adults with autism (2019-2023). He has been supporting the work of Pierre Creton for twenty years.



Pierre Creton | Still Life Primavera (2025). Still courtesy of Salle Principale gallery, Paris

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<https://fidmarseille.org/festival-36/programmation/still-life-primavera>
<https://inreviewonline.com/2025/07/14/still-life-primavera-review/>
<https://www.unifrance.org/annuaires/personne/323040/pierre-creton>
https://www.film-documentaire.fr/4DACTION/w_fiche_film/76268

Press |

Pierre Creton | Still Life Primavera (2025). courtesy of Salle Principale gallery, Paris





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filmography

Prospect Cottage / 2025 / 14'
Still Life Primavera / 2025 / 24'
Ex-votos explained to children / 2024 / 10'
Ex-voto for Gaza / 2024 / 3'
Au bord du naufrage / 2024 / 10'
Seven walks with Mark Brown / produced with Vincent Barré / 2024 / 110'
A prince / 2023 / 80'
Le Horla / 2022 / 30'
House of love / 2021 / 21'
God's cabin / 2012/2020 / 18'
Time will tell / 2020 / 26'
The beautiful summer / 2019 / 80'
A god has soft skin / 2019 / 6'
Go, Toto! / 2017 / 92'
On the critical path / 2013-2017 / 150'
Simon at the crack of dawn / directed with Vincent Barré / 2016 / 9'
Short treatise on walking in the plains / produced with Vincent Barré / 2014 / 26'
On the way / 2013 / 85'
The Market, small documentary business / 2012 / 31'
Garden side / 2011 / 4'
The great procession / 2011 / 59'
Haven't we always been kind? (collection) / 2010 / 117'
Deng guo Yuan, in the garden/ 2010 / 24'
Aline Cézanne / 2010 / 20'
The landscape as witness, meeting with Georges-Arthur Goldschmidt / 2009 / 43'
Dad, Mom, Perret and me, an apartment for witness / 2009 / 30'
Maniquerville / 2009 / 84'
The Berger's Hour / 2008 / 39'
The tendrils of the vines / 2007 / 10'
The arc of Iris, memory of a garden / produced with Vincent Barré / 2006 / 30'
Imposed landscape / 2006 / 51'
The trip to Vézelay / 2005 / 30'
Detour followed by Jovan from Foula / produced with Vincent Barré/ / 2005 / 30'
Sector 545 / 2004 / 105'
The sun is watching them (collection) / 2002 / 56'
One season / 2002 / 15'
Life after death / 2002 / 22'
The tour / 1997 / 19'
The subject / 1999 / 20'
Mercier et Camier / produced with Sophie Roger / 1998 / 8'

Seven pieces of the neoliberal puzzle / 1997 / 21'

The vicinal / 1994 / 8'

Sun / 1988 / 3'

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bio

Pierre Creton is an artist and gardener, his various jobs as a beekeeper or cowherd have led him to make films on the master/slave relationship or on the relationships we have with animals. He is the author of around forties films. He lives and works in Normandy in the Pays de Caux, a territory that he never ceases to explore and film: "He draws there, collects honey, cultivates his garden. The time of art and that of life are one. Work, meetings, readings give rise to films and drawings which in turn sculpt existence, opening it to experiences, territories which give rise to other films, other drawings. To work as an artist is to inhabit a world made livable by the invention of communities of thoughts, desires and friendships, where peasants, writers and filmmakers, the living and the dead, the near and the far, come together ». Cyril Neyrat

His films have been selected at Cannes (ACID or La Quinzaine des cinéastes) as well as regularly at the Viennale and in New York.

Pierre Creton is represented by Salle Principale gallery, Paris (France)

exhibitions and achievements

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2026 / Still Life Primavera, Doc Fortnight 2026 official selection, MoMA's Festival of International Nonfiction Film and Media, MoMA, Manhattan, NY, US / Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry – LE CRÉDAC, Ivry, France (solo) / Centre international d'art et du paysage, Île de Vassivière, Vassivière, France . **2025** / screening films of Pierre Creton for the Retrospective Derek Jarman, mk2 bibliothèque x Centre Pompidou, Paris, France / Art Basel Paris, Grand Palais, booth Salle Principale, Paris, France / Erotic Nature: The Films of Pierre Creton & Vincent Barré, US retrospective, BAM Film 2025, Brooklyn, NY, US / screening *L'Arc d'Iris* film with Vincent Barré (cur. Lou Forster), Jardins de l'avenir, jardin Calouste Gulbenkian, Bennerville-sur-Mer, France / Nature moderne (cur. Claire Le Restif), Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry – LE CRÉDAC, Ivry, France / screening films, cinema LUXY, Ivry, France / Pierre Creton, Vincent Barré, Ex-Voto, figures of care, Les Pêcheries, Museum, Fécamp, France / Rubus ! Rubus ! (cur. Maryline Brustolin), Salle Principale, Paris, France (solo) / Pierre Creton, Vincent Barré, Ex-Voto (cur. Alexandre Mare), Galerie Duchamp - Contemporary Art Center, Yvetot, France / Explicite Lyrique (cur. Isabelle Alfonsi

and Cécilia Becanovic with Florence Bonnefous / Air de Paris), Marcelle Alix gallery, Paris, France (invitation to Salle Principale) / Seven walks with Mark Brown Feature film with Vincent Barré, Mk2 Beaubourg, Paris, France . **2024** / Seven walks with Mark Brown Feature film with Vincent Barré, FID Marseille präsentiert

REPertoire #1: Pierre Creton & Vincent Barré, Volksbuehne, Berlin, Germany / Seven walks with Mark Brown Feature film with Vincent Barré, IDFA - International Documentary Festival Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands / Seven walks with Mark Brown Feature film with Vincent Barré, event Les plantes font leur cinéma (cur. Teresa Castro), Musée Albert Kahn, Paris, France / Seven walks with Mark Brown Feature film with Vincent Barré, Viennale, Vienna International Film Festival, Vienna, Austria / Seven walks with Mark Brown Feature film with Vincent Barré, Doclisboa - XXII International Film Festival, Lisbon, Portugal / Seven walks with Mark Brown Feature film with Vincent Barré, Filmi d'utrovi, cinema Galaxy, Lecci, Corsica, France / Art Basel Paris, Grand Palais, booth Salle Principale, Paris, France / Seven walks with Mark Brown Feature film with Vincent Barré, NYFF 62, Currents, New York, USA / Seven walks with Mark Brown Feature film with Vincent Barré, FID Marseille, France - CNAP Award / A big sister (help with CNC writing, with Mathilde Girard and Frédéric Strauss) / Edition of a book of drawings: Roseraie, La Traverse and Les éditions de l'oeil / Seven walks with Mark Brown Feature film with Vincent Barré (Help from the CNC: Authors' journey and the CNAP movement images. Andolfi production) / Edition of the DVD A prince JHR films . **2023** / Un prince (Feature film, writing assistance from the CNC, writing assistance Normandie Images) / Filmmakers' Fortnight, Cannes. GNCR Prize. New York Film Festival. BFI – London Festival. Viennale, Vienna / Exhibition at Labanque (Contemporary Art Center) in Béthune: À nos élans Curator Léa Bismuth . **2022** / Le Horla - International Cinema Festival, Marseille . **2021** / Cinéma du Réel Retrospective. Installation: Is it loving? Georges Pompidou Center / Edition of three book-DVD boxes La Traverse and Les éditions de l'oeil / House of love in competition - International Cinema Festival, Marseille, FICUNAM Mexico . **2020** / God's cabin, The future will tell (Help after completion - CNC) . **2019** / The Beautiful Summer, A God Has Soft Skin DVD Edition, JHR films / Retrospective at La Viennale. Vienna, Austria . **2018** / Edition of a Va Toto book-DVD box set! JHR films, Post-editions / MOMI, New York. Go, Toto! **2017** / Directed a feature film: Go, Toto! With the support of the CNC. Andolfi production, Prize for singular French-speaking film from the French Cinema Critics Union, French Institute of Online Criticism Prize. Festival: FID Marseille, Turin, Munich, New York, London / Exhibition with Vincent Barré at the Louviers Museum: The profession of living / Exhibition at the Mam gallery, Rouen. Resumption of a feature film: On the critical path . **2014** / A shame, essay on a self-image Edition La Gac-press . **2013** / Co-directing of a short film with Vincent Barré: Small treatise on walking in the plains . **2012** / Production of a feature film: On the way with the help of the Pôle Image Haute-Normandie. (in international FID Marseille competition) / Production of a medium-length film: The market, a small documentary business . **2011** / Production of a medium-length film: Le grand procession (in French competition - Marseille International Documentary Festival – DocBuenosAires, Argentina)

Creation of a DVD / book Trilogy box set in Pays-de-Caux, Edition CAPRICCI / Contribution to La nouvelle Revue Française: A tour of France. Under the direction of Stéphane Audeguy . **2010** / Contribution to the journal Chimères: Ticks, packs and larvae / Production of 4 films in the form of a collection: Have we not been kind? (in French competition - Marseille International Documentary Festival) / Production of a short film in China: Deng guo Yuan in the garden. Co-directed a short film with Vincent Barré: Aline Cézanne . **2009** / Contribution to the Revue Cent Quatre, under the direction of Nicolas Klotz and Élisabeth Perceval / Production of a medium-length film for a commission from the F.AC.I.M (ninth literary meetings) / The landscape as witness, meeting with Georges-Arthur Goldschmidt / Production of a medium-length film for a commission from the Malraux Museum, Le Havre: Papa Maman, Perret et moi. A witness apartment. Production of a feature film: Maniquerville with Françoise Lebrun and Clara Le Picard. With the help of the CNC (in international competition - Marseille International Documentary Festival) Festivals: Vienna, Turin, Rome, BAFICI (Argentina), Lussas . **2008** / Co-production with Cyril Neyrat of an issue for the Centquatre magazine Exhibition at the Marcel Duchamp gallery, Yvetot: La cabin de Dieu / Production of a medium-length film: L'heure du Berger (Grand prize in the French competition - G.N.C.R prize - Marseille International Documentary Festival) C.N.C quality prize /Co-creation of an installation with Vincent Barré: Heatwaves at the French Institute of Munich . **2007** / Production of a short film: Les Vrilles de la vignes with Françoise Lebrun . **2006** / Travel & co-directing of a short film in India with Vincent Barré : The Iris Arch Stock Exchange of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Villa Médicis Hors les Murs). Production of a medium-length film: Landscape imposed with the help of the Pôle Image Haute-Normandie. (official selection - Marseille International Documentary Festival). C.N.C. quality award . **2005** / Production of a short film: Le voyage à Vézelay with Françoise Lebrun, a G.R.E.C production with the help of the Pôle image Haute-Normandie. Exhibition at the Maison de la Culture in Amiens: Acting close. Co-directed a short film with Vincent Barré: Détour followed by Jovan from Foula. (official selection - Marseille International Documentary Festival) . **2004** / Production of a feature film: Sector 545 with the help of the D.R.A.C of Haute-Normandie. (official selection - Marseille International Documentary Festival). selected by L'A.C.I.D (independent cinema agency for its distribution) in Cannes. Exhibition at L'plac, Art Center, Le Havre: drawings for the trip to Vézelay . **2003** / Exhibition at the Marcel Duchamp gallery, Yvetot: P for phrenology. Exhibition at the F.R.A.C in Haute-Normandie: The world is ours . **2002** / Directed three short films: A Season, The Tour, Life After Death. One season, (selected in competition at the Pantin festival). C.N.C. quality award . **2000** / Exhibition at the Marcel Duchamp gallery, Yvetot. Creation of a video installation: Seven pieces of the neoliberal puzzle . **1999** / Production of a short film: L'asujetti with the help of the Haute-Normandie region . **1994** / Exhibition at the International Poetry Center - Marseille. Production of a short film: Le vicinal with the help of the A.R.C.A and the D.R.A.C . **1992** / Exhibition at the André Malraux Museum, Le Havre. Creation of a video installation: The round.

BOMB



Vincent Barré &
Pierre Creton
Marie-Helene Bertino
Alex Da Corte
Todd Gray
Bill T. Jones
Soledad Fátima Muñoz
Charlotte Richardson Ka
Karen Russell
Kunié Sugiura

Issue 171 / Spring 2025

Vincent Barré and Pierre Creton by Nicholas Elliott

The partners in life and art collaborate with friends and neighbors on sublime films intimately rooted in the Norman landscape.

MARCH 17, 2025



Mark Brown in Vincent Barré and Pierre Creton's *7 Walks with Mark Brown*, 2024.
Still courtesy of JHR Films and Several Futures.

The first time I met the French filmmaker, artist, and gardener Pierre Creton, he had just rescued a wounded pigeon from a New York City sidewalk and laid it in a bush on his way to the premiere of his film *A Prince* (2023) at the 61st New York Film Festival. Pierre's body of work stretches back more than thirty years and has earned him a hallowed reputation on a certain European festival circuit receptive to unconventional ways of bearing witness to reality, but it has until recently made few inroads in North America. My assignment as Pierre's interpreter at the festival introduced me both to the man and his work, a distinctly appropriate combination given the permeable boundary between Pierre's life and films. As I discovered with *A Prince's* tale of a young man's loves and friendships on the stretch of the Norman coast where Pierre sets all his work, the films are autobiographical and fanciful, unaffectedly erotic, and, above all, generous. The generosity lies in how Pierre invites us into his life, shooting in the places he lives and works, featuring himself on-screen surrounded by the people he loves, including the renowned sculptor Vincent Barré, his partner in life and filmmaking. His palpable investment in the individuals and landscapes he films, paired with his singular approach to narrative, yields a precious model for a life in film: Impervious to questions of career, fashion, glory, and spectacle, Pierre's films are captivating evidence of a life lived fully and honestly.

Lest this all sound a little too earnest, let me assure you that I have witnessed how intoxicating his films are for an audience. As I escorted Pierre out of the theater after the screening of *A Prince*, a gentleman in his sixties approached to tell us what he thought. Through my simultaneous translation, this gentleman gave Pierre

a rapturous analysis of the film that culminated with, “I hope you won’t mind my saying so, but your movie really made me want to suck your cock.” Pierre politely thanked this member of the public, and we continued into the lobby, our course set for the taxi that would take him to JFK and back to his gardens in Normandy. A year later, Pierre returned to New York City, this time accompanied by Vincent, with whom he codirected *7 Walks with Mark Brown* (2024). This wondrous filmed herbarium features the paleobotanist Mark Brown, also an actor in *A Prince*, as he leads Pierre, Vincent, and a small crew on expeditions to seven sites in the Pays de Caux region of Normandy in search of native plants. Comprised of two sections—the first composed of video footage documenting the shoot and the second of images of the plants filmed on celluloid—*7 Walks* is once again a celebration of what Pierre and Vincent choose to film, but one that is difficult to revel in without an awareness of the dangers weighing on these marvels of nature and life on earth. Yet the film gave me strength, as does the knowledge that Pierre and Vincent are in this world, living and working.



Vincent Barré as Alberto and Pierre Creton as Pierre-Joseph in Pierre Creton's *A Prince*, 2023. Still courtesy of JHR Films and Strand Releasing.

Translated from French by Nicholas Elliott.

Nicholas Elliott

Pierre, when I met you for the first time, in 2023, I was struck by your reluctance to be in New York City. You didn't really feel like coming because you had, shall we say, other things to do. What did each of you have to leave behind or interrupt to come to New York City this time?

Pierre Creton

It's true that I'm here a little reluctantly again. Vincent less so than me, because he has a history with this city. But there is something a little paradoxical, even contradictory, about traveling all this way to show a film about these walks. It's a compromise.

Vincent Barré

You left your animals and your gardens.

PC

Yes, but that seems less important than coming here to present this particular film in a way that entails a great deal of pollution. I also came because there's two of us. I wouldn't necessarily have come to present the film alone. Coming with Vincent is what motivated me.

NE

But what did you leave behind? What needs to get done that you're not getting done?

PC

In the most practical terms, I have to harvest the apples to make apple juice, cider, and calvados, and I have to collect the potatoes.

VB

Yes. And you had to leave your dog.

PC

But that's more an emotional thing. She and the other animals are being well taken care of by my friends.

NE

What about you, Vincent?

VB

I have one foot in Normandy, with Pierre, and another in the Gâtinais, south of Paris, where I have my sculpture studio and a large piece of land with animals. This

is an emotional journey for me because I'm returning to a city I visited when I was twenty-five, when I studied architecture in Philadelphia with Louis I. Kahn the year of his death, 1974. I spent a lot of time in New York City from when I was twenty-five to fifty, visiting friends. It's very emotional for me to be in this city that I've seen transformed and sometimes even have trouble recognizing. Back then I used to visit Lincoln Center to piously draw Henry Moore's sculptures and see the buildings. It brings up a lot of feelings to come back to this specific neighborhood for the film festival.

NE

Is this the first time you've come together?

VB

No. The second time. We came about five years ago to present *Go, Toto!* at the Museum of the Moving Image. On his other visits, Pierre didn't have much time to see anything, except for quick trips to the big museums. The first time, we stayed a little longer and went back to SoHo and Greenwich Village, around where I'd stayed previously. But what Pierre likes best here is Central Park and the squirrels.

NE

Don't you have squirrels in Normandy?

VB

Never as cheeky as here.

PC

And not in the cities. In the countryside, we do, but they're very different squirrels: a little smaller and red-haired. They're rarer and rarer.

VB

But the starlings came to eat off our plates earlier today.

PC

To get back to our being here, we really weren't expecting to show *7 Walks* at the New York Film Festival. I don't know how Dennis Lim, the artistic director of the festival, discovered the film, since our producer, Arnaud Dommerc, hadn't sent it to him. He must have sought it out. Obviously, it was really good news that the film was going to be here. Arnaud told us we absolutely had to come given our work was being supported.

NE

How did the two of you meet?



Mark Brown in Vincent Barré and Pierre Creton's *7 Walks with Mark Brown*, 2024. Still courtesy of JHR Films and Several Futures.

VB

In two stages.

PC

First in 1994.

VB

That's right. When I was running the master's program at the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris, one of my students, Sophie Roger, a childhood friend of Pierre's, invited me and another professor to see her work in Normandy. And she introduced me to Pierre. He wasn't even thirty. He was very young. I was still teaching, and we saw each other for one day and then nothing. Ten years later, Sophie invited me to an open studios day in Vattetot-sur-Mer, in the presbytery where she and Pierre had their studios. I saw Sophie's work again, and I discovered Pierre's—the drawings, the objects. I saw him filming. I didn't know what he was planning or what the film he was making would be. It wound up becoming the feature *Secteur 545* (Sector 545), in which I briefly appear at the end. A few weeks later, Pierre showed me his films, and I showed him the handful of films I had made alone. We got along and rediscovered each other, in a different way. We fell into each other's arms. This encounter that could have been fleeting became solid.

Very quickly, I wanted us to seal our connection with a project. I've traveled since I was sixteen, so I wanted to take him on a trip. He agreed on the condition that we make a short film, which became our first, *Detour Followed by Jovan from Foula*. Foula is a remote Shetland island. The idea was to go to a barren, quasi-deserted place in Europe to see how we got along while traveling, which is a test, but we

did not know what sort of film we would make. This way of thinking of a journey as a film came to fruition the next year in our second collaboration, *The Arc d'Iris: Memories of a Garden*. We made it in dry, inhabited valleys in the Himalayas, at thirteen thousand feet, where we came across alpine flora that we also find in our own gardens in Normandy, because the plants were introduced by the English. Our friendship was sealed in our work, and it held through our work. In the two decades since, we have continued to make several short films together, and I have sometimes been involved in Pierre's features, whether as a cowriter or an actor. That creates a fellowship—no, that's not the word. A powerful bond. This latest film is a bit of a surprise. Together we applied for a grant from the Centre national du cinéma for which we had to show that we had a shared practice we wanted to deepen. That raised the idea of bringing back this film with Mark Brown.

**“Our friendship was sealed in our work, and it held through our work.”
— Vincent Barré**

PC

Have you seen *Arc d'Iris*?

NE

I haven't, but this morning I watched *Short Treatise on Walking in the Plains*, your 2014 short, which seems connected to *7 Walks*, since it's also about walking in Normandy.

PC

Yes. And that was our first film produced by Arnaud. That's where our story with him began.

I was asking about *Arc d'Iris* because it's an herbarium, like *7 Walks*. *Arc d'Iris* also comes up in *A Prince*—it's the film that the protagonists make in the Himalayas. To discover the plants that we grow in France in their home in the Himalayas was so powerful that *Arc d'Iris* took this unique direction: We started by filming one flower, then two, and so on, continuing until we made this herbarium. We showed the film at Le Bois des Moutiers in Varengeville-sur-Mer, which is one of the first marvelous gardens in Normandy. We were invited there by Alice Schyler Mallet, the granddaughter of the doctor Guillaume Mallet, who created the garden, to participate in a seminar entitled “The Journey of Plants.” Mark Brown saw the film as one of the participants and loved it. He told us we should do the same thing in Normandy. A decade later, we visited Mark on his land. We had two requests: to have him act in *A Prince*, in which he plays the paleobotanist, and finally to make the film he had suggested we make, which became *7 Walks*.

NE

So *A Prince* and *7 Walks* were brewing at the same time?

VB

Absolutely.

NE

How did you realize the making of 7 Walks would be documented and included in the film?

PC

Along with meeting Mark ten years ago, a fundamental aspect of 7 Walks is Antoine Pirotte, who is our director of photography and also an actor in A Prince. He had a decisive impact on the film's form: Antoine was trained to use film stock as a student at La Fémis, and he wants to keep using it. He gave us the idea and the desire to return to the origins of cinema, as Mark returns to the origins of plants. If we hadn't met Antoine, we wouldn't have shot on film.

VB

At the very beginning of the project, we were thinking more of an herbarium shot on film, slowly and silently, but Pierre decided to record the shoot on video as well. We distributed the roles among ourselves: Pierre shot on video, Antoine on film, Sophie Roger assisted Antoine, and I drew and sometimes tried to record the silence of the landscape, though I'm far from a sound engineer. Our producer Arnaud was there helping out, along with a few locals, including our old-time friend, Pierre Barry. We became a little community, something like a theater company. We didn't know what Pierre was shooting, and he was the only one who could hear what Mark was saying through his clip-on mic. So while Pierre was recording everything, the rest of us were in motion, busy with our individual tasks. There was some unpredictability to it. Along the way Pierre realized the importance of all the footage he was collecting. I discovered it when we watched the dailies. By that point it was already clear that the film would be in two parts.

PC

That was decided very quickly. Not during the editing process but on the shoot.

VB

But it came—

PC

—in a pretty intuitive way.



Mark Brown in *7 Walks with Mark Brown*, 2024. Still courtesy of JHR Films and Several Futures.

VB

As with everything we do, we didn't decide things in advance and lock them down. We were in the Pays de Caux, just like in the Himalayas, asking, "So what do we do now?" And we did it. It was like getting a breath of fresh air.

PC

The film takes shape by doing it.

VB

It takes shape by doing it. The funding commission had told us it would be good to hear our voices, to feel our presence, to be aware of the locals we met. We were happy to listen to these suggestions, and we had them in mind when Pierre was shooting, without deciding too much ahead of time. There was a period at the beginning, before we really started shooting, when we thought we'd go location by location, alternating between film and video. But then the film and video appeared clearly as two different moments. There is a surprise in coming back to the same location an hour later in the film—seeing some plants for the first time, or seeing them again but differently, and asking questions about the plants, looking for their scientific names—that created a kind of tension between the two sections that we really liked.

"Making elderberry jam is as important as making films."

— Pierre Creton

NE

As Vincent said, you had both been making films alone when you met. How was your relationship to cinema changed by your bond?

VB

I made three fifteen-minute films when I was teaching at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. I used to tell my students, "Use every means to create. Don't have any inhibitions. If you have something to say, say it by every means possible." Finally, I thought, Hold on, you're fifty and you've never dared. Do it! So I did. I made three short films, which Arnaud will soon release on DVD. I made them without having much knowledge of cinema or even contemporary video art. I made them by throwing myself into action, let's say. Then I met Pierre. I discovered his work, which was at least as plentiful as mine and, in any case, had more solid foundations. Then we worked together, differently. Your turn, Pierre.

PC

It might be worth describing the context in which we made our first films—that is, shortly after the introduction of small digital cameras. Vincent could film his travels with very little equipment, and I could film at home with my employers, friends, and neighbors in a very intimate, economical way. That's the context that allowed us to start making images. In fact, at the beginning, we tended to call it "video," and we didn't dare cross the barrier between video and cinema. Only later were there filmmakers whose films were made with video.

NE

What I'm trying to get at is how cinema is part of your everyday lives. For example, Pierre, it doesn't seem like there was ever a point in your life when you said to yourself, "I'm going to be a film director, I'm going to make a living making films, I'm going to be part of the industry."

PC

No, I never thought like that. I still don't think like that. I never managed to make a living with film or with art, which is still the case, since I continue to work as a gardener to "make a living," as they say.

NE

But am I being romantic when I think that the things you do to "make a living" are as important or as fulfilling to you as making a film?

PC

That is not romantic at all. Making elderberry jam is as important as making films.

VB

In fact, you put it in your films.

PC

It's in several. In 1988 or 1989, when I was a student at the arts university at Le Havre, I made elderberry jam for the first time, and a year hasn't passed without me making it. I'm only talking about the jam, but there's also the potatoes, the honey, the cider—

VB

Now it's the gardens, which have come into the films. The events of his small life—that is, a quiet life, avoiding accidents—serve to nourish his films. Before *Go, Toto!*, all his films were made with neighbors, friends, the people he loves. And now it's with his gardening clients, like Manon Schaap, who acts in *A Prince*. In that film, the boy's parents live in the house where Pierre looks after the garden, and this will continue in the next films. He mixes everything together.

PC

And vice versa. Cinema animates my life. It gives meaning to my work and relationships with the people I know.



Ghislaine Paul-Cavallier as Madeleine and Pierre Creton as Pierre in Pierre Creton's *Go, Toto!*, 2017. Still courtesy of JHR Films and Several Futures.

VB

It's true that hiring people to be in the films can turn their lives upside down. I'm thinking of Pierre Barry, who plays Adrien in *A Prince* and is also in *7 Walks*. I'll put it all out there: When we knew that *A Prince* wouldn't get state funding from the CNC, I put some money into the film, since I had sold some sculptures. Pierre Barry, a well-off retired farmer, also put money in. Then, when Pierre Barry met Antoine Pirotte, Antoine wanted him to act in the film, too, and Pierre agreed.

When we screened the film in Fécamp, near where we all live in Normandy, Pierre Barry was there in front of almost everyone he knows, and they all saw what happens in the film. He came out of the closet by saying, "It's only a movie, but it's also my life." That took a lot of determination for a man whose wife had passed away three years earlier and who had spent a lifetime hiding a rather hyperactive homosexual life. Manon had never acted. Antoine hadn't either, though he's very clever and does it easily. This way of making a film creates deep friendships. As for Pierre and me, I'm not sure what would remain of our friendship, our love, if it had stayed purely on a romantic and culinary level. Probably not much.

NE

Vincent, how does film influence the other parts of your creative life as an artist?

VB

I've traveled alone from the age of sixteen to the present day, drawing the whole time and entrusting my sketchbooks with what's on my mind and what I see. My sketchbooks are like journeys. I know basically all they contain, and in most cases I know where I was when I drew something, including in the Himalayas. Drawing and my inner life are connected to mental or physical trips. Once I started filming, the two things that came to my attention were sound and time—temps in French, the passing of time as well the weather. I realized that time and sound were things that went beyond the recording of my inner life in my sketchbooks. Obviously, I'm a visual person, and when I'm alone with the camera, I see things. I like framing and I like the accidents that come up. I discovered all that by doing, thanks to the technical support I received: I was handed a MiniDV camera and a tripod, given half an hour of advice, and off I went. That's how I started.

When I got to know Pierre, I took him far away to make a film. He had some resistance to going so far away, but it was a compromise. In any case, now I make films with someone who has a terrific culture of cinema and way of working. It's an apprenticeship. It's terrific how we get along in silence. We're in sync, even when we're looking at things that are uncertain. We don't need to convince each other. I immediately get it when he's seen something. And if I'm the one who sees it, he hears it.

NE

You're an odd match, in a sense, given Vincent's love for travel and Pierre's sedentariness. But as anchored as the films are in a local reality, they feel open to what lies elsewhere. The image of the Yvetot train station in several films feels like a gateway to a wider world.

PC

We really are the nearby and the faraway, Vincent and I. It also makes me think of older films, like *Life After Death*, which I filmed in Jean Lambert's home—which is now the house I live in—shortly after his death. So that's very local, but the film also

has a metaphysical and therefore universal dimension. Granted, we're not talking about the beginning of a distant journey the way the shot of the Yvetot train station is in *A Prince*.



Ghislaine Paul-Cavallier as Madeleine and Pierre Creton as Pierre in Pierre Creton's *Go, Toto!*, 2017. Still courtesy of JHR Films and Several Futures.

VB

The image of that train station is important in Pierre's life. He doesn't like to travel much, so people come to him. That's where he greets them and where he says goodbye.

PC

It's the same train station from Jean Renoir's *The Human Beast*.

NE

Are there parts of your life that aren't in the films? Or that you wouldn't put in the films?

PC

I'm not sure. My life is made for the films. At the outset there might have been a life choice before an artistic choice, but very quickly everything was intimately connected.

VB

Even his visual art comes into his films: Antoine Pirotte's drawings in *A Prince* are Pierre's own drawings. And he brings my drawings into his films too.

PC

For me everything started with drawing. The films are an extension of the drawings. Even what they represent for me in life comes from drawing. There came a time when I realized that drawing had always come with the question, "What am I going to draw and how am I going to draw it?" With the films, I never asked myself that. Never. The films are always born of a desire. I never looked for a subject.

VB

Several films were made without a project in mind.

PC

All of them.

VB

Not all. But *The Shepherd's Hour*, *Ex-voto pour Gaza* (*Ex-voto for Gaza*), and the recent films were made at home, with the jams and the ticktock of the clock and the cat. It starts with a moment, then an intuition, and then you know it will become a film. It's like, now Pierre is taking photos (click, click), which become material he accumulates—like notes that he later gives a form to—on top of the formalized projects or those submitted for funding.

NE

Your films are extremely intimate. What's it like to include so much of your sexuality in your work?

PC

It's hard to say what it feels like, but I can tell you it was there from the beginning. It was obvious that picking up a camera was if not a sexual act, then at least an erotic one. That's for sure. On a fundamental level, there was an intent to explore sexuality and eroticism. It may have become more clearly and politically articulated as I went along.

VB

You should see *The Shepherd's Hour*. It brings up eroticism in a way that isn't head-on but very powerful, though the act itself is practically not shown. In fact, the sound of the mattress squeaking in the film was made by Pierre Barry, twenty years before *A Prince*. When I first saw *The Shepherd's Hour*, it had a very powerful effect on me because I was discovering this aspect of Pierre's work. For me, that's the earliest of the films where sexuality so clearly comes up, but in a way that if you don't want to see it, you won't.



Vincent Barré as Alberto and Antoine Pirotte as Pierre-Joseph in Pierre Creton's *A Prince*, 2023. Still courtesy of JHR Films and Strand Releasing.

PC

The *Shepherd's Hour* is about sex and death. The film was shot in Jean Lambert's house, which I bought to finish *Life After Death*. I had begun that film with Jean and was able to finish it in his house. Seven years after his death, Jean's presence returned in a very intense, totally unexpected way. I grabbed the camera to film that ghost. It was really like a séance.

NE

I'd like to talk about sound in your work in general, Pierre. One thing I really like about the second part of *7 Walks* is that there's no direct sound, if I'm not mistaken. We simply see silent images of flowers, shot on film, with Mark Brown's comments in voice-over. Seeing these beautiful images of plants without hearing the sound of their environment puts me in a particular, highly receptive state, reminiscent of the one I enter into when I'm watching a strand of American experimental cinema that reaches from Stan Brakhage to Nathaniel Dorsky. I find that in many of your films. You often use voice-over, whether it's to read a literary text or to speak for someone who is on-screen but not heard.

PC

First of all, I think that sound can produce images as much as images can. They have the same level of importance. But to talk about sound, I'd have to start with my relationship to sound in life: I essentially live in silence. I really privilege that above all else. I prefer hearing birds to music, I think. It's really very important. I like to hear silence, but I also really like the serial radio drama. I listen to radio dramas as a

lot, and I've done so ever since I started listening to the radio, which was rather late, in 1999, in the very particular context of a certain house with a certain radio. I really like it; it truly inhabits me. That may explain the relationship to voices in the films.

VB

It's a relationship to literature.

PC

Yes, that too, of course.

VB

The voice-overs in the films are very literary. You've often said that you would publish the screenplays.

PC

But in the case of *7 Walks*, we wanted to use the sound of the editing room, since we chose to show the images to Mark and have him comment on them live. We didn't record him in a different context. We didn't drop his voice on the images.

VB

We were in front of the screen. His voice is softer than usual because we were so close to the screen.

PC

We built a little tent around the screen in the room where we edit, and Mark watched the images.

VB

And you can hear ambient sound from outside.

PC

There isn't much. But there's the wind of the place where he's discovering the images. You really have to listen close to hear it.

VB

So, in this case, it's not exactly a voice-over. He's discovering the images. We were careful not to show them to him until he came to record.

PC

And all at once, without stopping.



Mark Brown in *7 Walks with Mark Brown*, 2024. Still courtesy of JHR Films and Several Futures.

VB

Without stopping. He's discovering the footage, saying, "Oh! I remember that. Where was that exactly? I see that plant, but I'm not sure of its name," and so on. He has these moments of surprise and of wonder. Then we showed him the edit of the shoot. He said, "You should take out all the sound. I already said all that before." So we agreed. Then we showed him the film footage a second time. By then he'd had time to look up the Latin names in his atlas. We thought we'd make a silent movie with only the Latin names in his voice-over. His voice in that version was a little peremptory. But when Pierre and I returned to the edit, just the two of us, we decided that was wrong. His first discovery was very beautiful, with a softer voice. So we blended the sound of the first and second recordings to play over the images shot on film.

PC

We called them the poetic voice and the scientific voice.

VB

And in the first part, you hear his voice during the shoot, since he was talking the whole time—because he talks all the time. Luckily, sometimes it's funny, sometimes it's sententious, sometimes it's a little irritable. And sometimes it's so emotional, like at the end of *7 Walks*: You can hear the feeling in Mark's voice as he recognizes the last image and the end of this adventure.

PC

7 Walks is the first time I filmed someone wearing a clip-on mic. That was really my guide. For the first part, the shoot on video, while I was filming, I had the feeling that I was following his voice more than anything else. That's what came first. It was really his voice that guided the images.

NE

Listening to you both talk about this two-part structure reinforces something the film does quite subtly. It's not a confrontational film, but it's clearly about what we're losing. Its two parts—the immediacy of the shoot followed by someone looking back from a distance—emphasize a before and after. A paradise lost, which is captured on the beautiful, near archaic medium of film. And what's sad for me, as a lifelong city dweller, is that it's a paradise I've barely known.

VB

Let me read you the message Mark wrote us when we learned that we would be coming to New York City without him:

**Tell the Americans to be luminous
like plants.
And that capitalism leads to death
and our extinction.
We must be humble and simple
like wildflowers.
If you hear this and take it to heart,
then we can be saved.
There is nothing wrong with being
humble.
Yet there is EVERYTHING wrong
with being egotistical!
Ask not what the world can do
for you but what YOU can do
for the world!!
Generosity pays but meanness
has to be paid for.
Be full of light like plants.**

It's beautiful, but it also touches on your uneasiness, Nicholas. Mark lives inside this mix of wonder and tragedy. The two of us are a little bit on the periphery, and here, in New York City, you're in another world. But it's true that it's a shared world. His message moves from anger to wonder to tenderness and also becomes didactic. He's not afraid to address you Americans. You think we should read it at the screening tomorrow?

NE

You have to read it. The question for me is whether you read it before or after the screening. If you read it before, viewers will enter the film through that lens, and there's reason to encourage that. But at the same time, your film invites us to be free.

PC

It's good to let people be free, to let them react, to wonder where they are and what they're seeing.

VB

Yes, we should read it after. Like a testament.

NE

It's like telling viewers, "You've seen the film, you've had your experience, and you're going to think about it. But here's one way of interpreting it."

PC

I think it will mostly confirm what many viewers will have felt.

NE

Yet what really moved me about the film is that, despite its simplicity, it works on so many different levels. There's the level we've been talking about, but also your own lives and how they intertwine with cinema. Clearly, the two go together. Your work, your films, are your life, aren't they?

PC

Yes, that's how it is. It's been that way since the beginning.

—

Nicholas Elliott is a writer and French/English translator in New York City. Recent translations include Jean-Luc Godard by Nicole Brenez (The Film Desk, forthcoming) and Footlights by Serge Daney (Semiotext(e), 2023). His translation of the epilogue to Robin Coste Lewis's Voyage of the Sable Venus will be staged by Alice Diop at the Festival d'Automne in Paris in fall 2025. He is a contributing editor at BOMB

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