

Musée de Préhistoire des Gorges du Verdon presents



“Early Man on a Modern Road”

by Dore Bowen, Isabelle Massu
and Isabelle Gressier

May 16–December 15, 2009

Opening May 16th 7pm with guided tour
and diorama performance

Musée de Préhistoire des Gorges du Verdon
04500 Quinson, France

P: 04 92 74 09 59

Hours Wed-Mon 10am–7pm

Museum: <http://www.museeprehistoire.com/>

Project: <http://www.aux2mondes.org/earlyman>

In honor of the 150th anniversary of Charles Darwin’s publication *On the Origin of Species*, “Early Man on a Modern Road” alters the architectural, visual and narrative forms used by the Musée de Préhistoire des Gorges du Verdon in order to tell the story of man’s evolution in unexpected ways. French artist Isabelle Massu and American art historian Dore Bowen conducted a research residency at the museum and, in collaboration with French scenographer Isabelle Gressier, present this four-part project at the Musée de Préhistoire May 16th through December 15, 2009. A related exhibition will be presented at the Thompson Gallery at San José State University from October 6 through November 6, 2009.

With a playful glance at the present moment, “Early Man on a Modern Road” takes as its premise an archaeological discovery two hundred years in the future. In this fictional narrative, scientists working at the Musée de Préhistoire in 2200 A.D. discover a new stratum of material at the famous Baume-Bonne cave in Quinson, France. The scientists hypothesize that a group of renegade campers inhabited the Baume-Bonne cave between 1974 until they mysteriously disappeared in 2009. Since the remains left by the cave dwellers show signs of evolutionary transformation, scientists argue that this discovery significantly alters the story of human evolution by helping them to understand the subtle metamorphosis from Homo Sapien to Homo Plasticus. It is from the point of view of this new species, Homo Plasticus, that “Early Man on a Modern Road” reinterprets the museum by imagining what our contemporary moment might look like to the future.

“Early Man on a Modern Road” is comprised of four works. *Everything Must Go!* envelops the outer wall of the museum’s monumental Norman Foster building with images of man-made materials and natural specimens—including a jellyfish, a cathode tube, cement, sand, bone, and Styrofoam—in order to suggest a fusion of elements into hybrid organisms. On the lower level of the museum, *The Complaint of Progress* is a faux archaeological site presenting the discovery at the Bonne-Baume cave in 2200 A.D. Constructed to show three layers of civilization—ceramic, iron and metal, and plastic—this site features objects and interviews with local residents. Located on the fifth channel of the museum’s audio guide, *The Alterguide* accompanies the visitor through the archaeological site on the lower level and continues on the second floor, steering visitors through seven dioramas by reading particular objects—such as a skull, a snail, or a spindle—as charged signs of popular ideology. *Quinson, 2009 A.D.* is a contemporary diorama that complicates the narrative created by the museum. Featuring a campsite near the Verdon River, the diorama harkens back to the semi-nomadic settlements of prehistory yet features gadgets characteristic of modern-day life.