



**CENTRE PHOTOGRAPHIQUE  
D'ILE-DE-FRANCE**

PRESS RELEASE - July 2023

# *Place(s)* Victor Burgin

**From October 14<sup>th</sup>  
to January 21<sup>st</sup> 2023**

Victor Burgin, *Think About It*, 1976, courtesy the artist and Thomas Zander gallery, Cologne



## **It's worth thinking about . . .**

To finance the system of conspicuous expenditure, an extraordinary credit network has been set up, which, when considered, reveals much of our real class situation. The earners of wages and salaries are alike in this, that most of them become quickly involved in a system of usury which spreads until it is virtually inescapable.

How many supposedly middle-class people really own their houses, or their furniture, or their cars? Most of them are as radically unpropertied as the traditional working class, who are now increasingly involved in the same process of usury.

In part it is the old exaction, by the propertied, from the needs of the unpropertied, and the ordinary middle-class talk of the property and independence which make them substantial citizens is an increasingly pathetic illusion.

One factor in maintaining the illusion is that much of the capital needed to finance the ordinary buyer comes from his own pocket, through insurance and the like, and this can be made to look like the sensible process of accumulating social capital.

What is not usually noticed is that established along the line of this process are a group of people using its complications to make substantial profit out of their neighbours' social needs.

As we move into this characteristic contemporary world, we can see the supposed new phenomenon of classlessness as simply a failure of consciousness.



**Class consciousness  
think about it**

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# THE EXHIBITION PROJECT

## • Press conference

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> October from 11 am

In the presence of the artists

Free shuttle from Paris

(Place de la Bastille).

Reservation required. Please contact

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## • Opening

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> October at 3 pm

In the presence of the artists

Free shuttle from Paris (Place de la Bastille). Reservation required.

*Place(s)* presents an ensemble of enigmatic works by internationally-known artist, theorist and teacher Victor Burgin (b. 1941, Great Britain).

This exhibition, which is taking place in parallel to *Ça*, a monographic exhibition at the Jeu de Paume in Paris, looks back at the decisive changes in Burgin's approach between 1976 and 1984.

After a period during which he appropriated advertising images, he began taking his own black & white photos that were informed by a street photography aesthetic. Combining words and images, his works focused on issues such as the class struggle and gender discrimination, providing a critical analysis of the politics of representation and the construction of ideology, while exploring the multiple interpretations of images.

The works on show produced between 1976 and 1984 bear witness to a period of artistic explorations anchored in the realities of society. They correspond to a desire to analyse and deconstruct the ways in which the world is represented, whether consciously or subconsciously. To this end, Victor Burgin made use of two powerful narrative tools: words and pictures. He developed a practice that culminated in the association of photos and texts in works that represented a counter discourse to accepted ideology. His strategy evolved according to his ongoing reflections on the question and new sources of inspiration.

From 1973 to 1976, in reaction to the sheer overabundance of photos at the time, Victor Burgin began appropriating advertising images, which were accompanied by texts written in a style that reproduced the rhetoric of advertising copy. Highlighting the contradictions of capitalist society, his works endeavoured to encourage spectators to look with a critical eye and develop class consciousness (*Think about it*, 1976 being a good example).

However, in a quest for greater freedom of action, Burgin began producing his own images from 1976 onwards, looking to street photography for inspiration. He considered the latter as the means of photographic expression par excellence (see his series *King's Road* 1976-84). Although he continued to juxtapose texts and images, their efficacy now relied on a play of associations that called on the subconscious. Burgin's thinking, notably informed by Roland Barthes, had broadened its scope to integrate the lessons learned from psychoanalysis and fulfil the objective of revealing "the subconscious of the image". This corresponded to a shift in focus from the representation of political reality to the politics of representation.

At the same time, another change took place in his choice of subject: until then, Burgin had concentrated on class inequality, but he now seized upon the question of gender inequality. This led him to tackle several closely interrelated issues, such as the patriarchy, the construction of subjectivity and sexuality (as illustrated in *Zoo 78*, 1978).

Finally, this period marked the start of the key role of locations in his work, mainly the urban environment, for example in his series *In Lyon* (1980) and *In Grenoble* (1981). As its title aptly suggests, this exhibition could also be compared to a stroll through a city – its streets submerged in images. As we journey from one place to the next, we discover Burgin's works that seem to exist in a dual environment in that they propose the discovery of both a physical and psychical space.

## THE ARTIST

Since the late 1960s Victor Burgin's work has established him as both a highly influential artist and a renowned theorist of the still and moving image.

Burgin first came to prominence in the late 1960s as one of the originators of Conceptual Art. In the 1970s his work consisted mainly of large framed photographic sequences, involving printed texts either juxtaposed with or superimposed on the image. At the beginning of the 1990s he turned towards digital video, but video from the point-of-view of photography – for example, Burgin is particularly interested in the relation between stasis and movement.

Throughout Burgin's work there is a constant attention to this space 'between' the viewer and the object – to the 'real' world as seen through the prism of narrative, memory and fantasy.

His works are in the collections of renowned museums such as The Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Tate in London.

For more information, visit <https://www.galeriezander.com/artists/66235/victor-burgin/works/>

## OUR PARTNERS

### CPIF partners



Victor Burgin and the Centre Photographique d'Île-de-France would like to thank the Thomas Zander gallery (Cologne) and the Grenoble Museum.

## IN PARALLEL

### ● JEU DE PAUME

#### Exhibition at the Jeu de Paume

##### Victor Burgin, *Ça*

From October 10<sup>th</sup> 2023 to January 28<sup>th</sup> 2024

The exhibition at Jeu de Paume features a selection of works from the 1970s-1980s, when Burgin worked with black and white photography, as well as works from the past two decades, when he starts to work with video. It will include some of his most recent works made with a "game engine" – software originally designed to create video games.