

The Empty Spaces of Château Rouge (Paris)

The 18th district of Paris includes the chic Montmartre district as well as La Goutte d'Or. The novels of Emile Zola describe La Goutte d'Or at the end of the 19th century as the working class district in the north of Paris. Today, La Goutte d'Or, which is inhabited by immigrants, is divided into two parts, north and south. The southern part is inhabited by Maghrebines. The northern part is called Château Rouge and immigrants from diverse black African countries, Eastern Europe and Asia live there. Quite a number of these immigrants are without legal papers in France. They are non-registered yet the children attend official schools. Some of them live in dilapidated buildings or in buildings designated for demolition.

During the presidency of Delanoé, Château Rouge has been destined for redevelopment. Entire blocks have already been transformed into empty spaces, or parts have been torn down. It looks like there are wounds within the streets. They often remain that way for some time till they will be rebuilt. These now seemingly empty spaces are filled with stories of their former inhabitants, visible in the tracks of their fireproofed walls. There are traces of glazed tiles, wallpaper, stairs, and electrical installations within outlines of the buildings. These visible traces of the displaced inhabitants question their fate since non-registered people are not relocated. Who is going to live here next? How is the district of La Goutte d'Or developing with new architecture and new inhabitants?

My sculptures are the negative or empty spaces of former buildings defined by their fireproofed walls. They are depicted as models (scale 1:100) in cardboard, tracing paper, pencil and gouache.

Judit Villiger, 2006