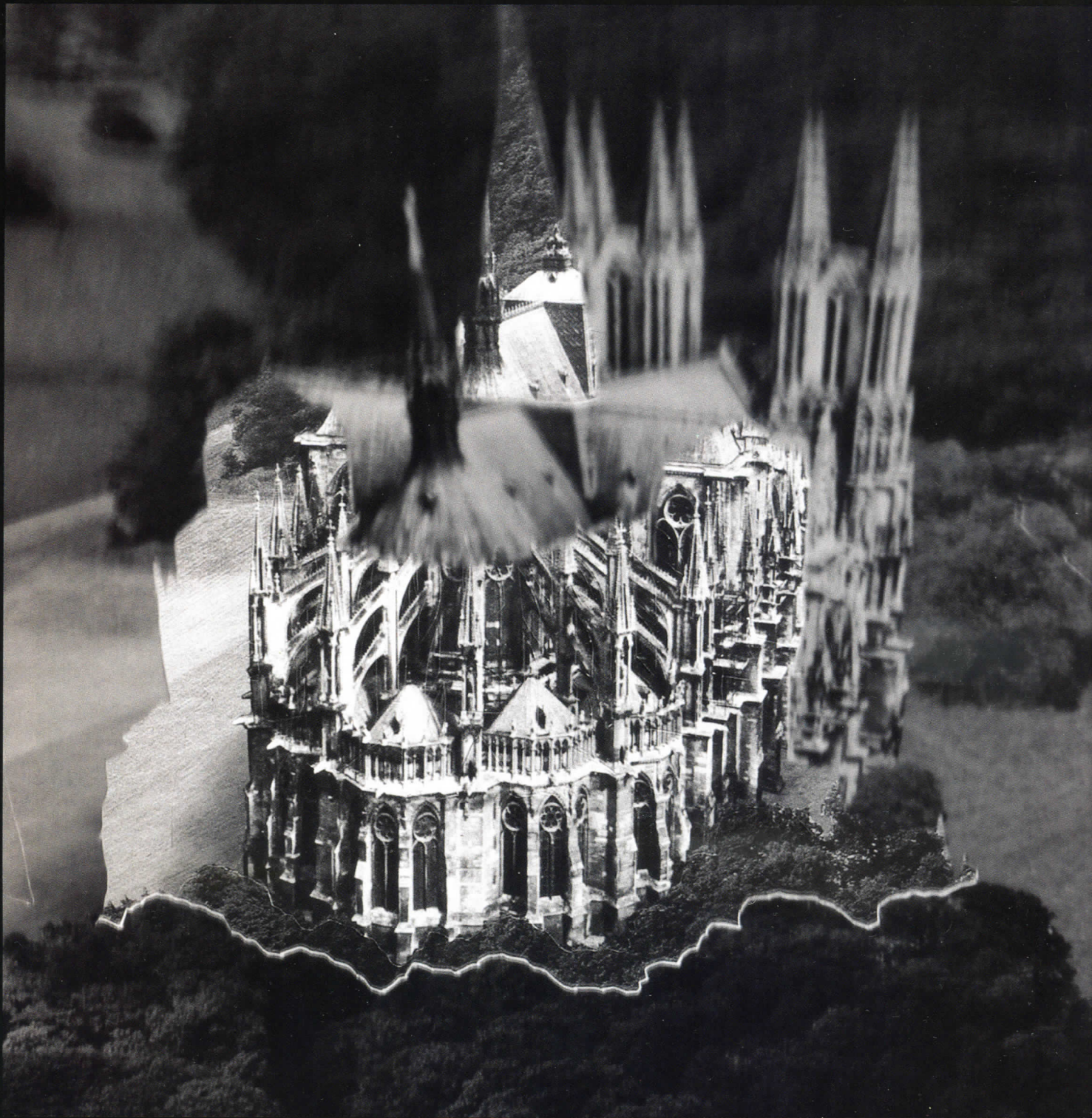


LEAH OATES

INTERVIEWS **ROB CARTER**



Leah Oates: Your work involves architecture, the history and science of plants, the environment and colonialism. How did you come to focus on these themes and how do you see these themes evolving in your work?

Rob Carter: The starting point of almost all my projects is architecture. It's a theme that probably became more defined and consistent when I moved to New York. Buildings of all kinds define the history of civilization and act as a mirror of society, whether it be societal needs from within or the imposition of history or authority. A building, whether it be house, castle, stadium, or church often outlives the people who built it, sometimes by thousands of years; their context is constantly changing through time. It's this evolving and malleable history

Based on an initial idea this process allows the project to evolve and grow until it reaches a point where I can commit to a creative process that will likely take many months to complete.

Much of the work clearly reveals its process, but the seamlessness of the single camera lens does create illusion. I am keen to find this unsteady zone in-between seamless illusion and certainty, represented more overtly by my recent exhibit at *Art in General: Faith in a Seed*, but also in photographs like the *Union Territory* series.

The work that involves the stop-motion animation of inkjet prints requires a systematic approach. Once my idea is clarified and the images are collected I commence on a period of Photo-shop work to combine/collage the images so that they can relate



Rob Carter, *Faith in a Seed* [video still], 2012.
Three channel video installation, total running
time: 30 minutes

that holds my attention, and looking back it's easy to find the origins of my interest in my family vacations. Amongst some trips to the beach, summer holidays in the Carter family usually involved exploring castles, churches, stately homes, cathedrals and pagan sites in the UK and France.

It seems that moving to the USA from Europe gave me a new freedom to explore these themes as the perception of architectural time is so different in the US. In fact, to begin with, I became more interested in the disposability and fragility of buildings here, especially in terms of stadium architecture.

The plants initially developed from thinking about different forms and periods of experienced time especially in relationship to video and photography. To some extent I was interested in the plants as actors, making their own stop motion performance; introducing a calculated but more random strategy into the work. As my work has evolved, the meaning and history of the plants themselves has become more significant. This can be seen as a development of my interest in their symbolic power and history, but also as a response to our evolving understanding of our relationship to food and the environment.

LO: Some artists are very methodical while others are more instinctive or process-oriented. Would you elaborate on your art-making process?

RC: My working process needs to be quite methodical, but I try to make it as free and instinctual as possible at certain times. One of the most significant periods that I can be most instinctive is with the initial research and planning: extensive period looking at books and exploring information available online.

to one another, and reveal or transform each other. The animation itself is the most structured and also most intuitive part of the process. The images I have created form a framework of evolvment and movements that I need to adhere to, but within the defined parameters there's plenty of room for intuition and accident within the stop-motion animation shoot. Once the images have been shot, video editing brings everything together, and depending on the project can be as complex and significant as anything else; there's plenty of room for conceptual and digital manipulation during this process. The final stage is the soundtrack, requiring another phase of recording and sourcing. This can involve recording sounds in multiple environments whether it be Madison Square Garden or my kitchen. These sounds then need to be synched and edited to conform to the visuals and this could apply to both the movement of a building or that of a seedling.

LO: Sometimes success in New York City seems to be marked by sales at big name galleries, connections and status. How do you define success?

RC: Success depends on what angle you see it from. Unfortunately money and success are very closely linked in the art world - the topic of a great deal of writing. Lets just go with this dictionary definition:

"the favorable or prosperous termination of attempts or endeavors"

That makes it sound like the very end and I doubt I'll care by then. □