

## **Nicolas Carras** **by John M. Bennett, January 2011**

Nicolas Carras is a video artist, sound artist, photographer, and poet, and a founding member of the Parisian art collective SOS-ART. His work has always impressed me for its originality and for the purity with which he carries out his ideas and approaches. At first glance, his work seems extremely minimal: for example a handheld shot of a curb and part of a sidewalk, with maybe a pair of feet passing through the frame, which is unmoving, and accompanied by only the barest trace of ambient sound. Many of his videos of this nature are of only a few minutes duration, but when several of them are grouped together they very quickly seem to be images, or fragments of an existence, that imply and communicate an enormous emotional content, a content which varies considerably from piece to piece. There is a real life, both a very specific one and a very universal one, inhering in them, and they can be watched again and again, each time acquiring more and more resonance and meaning.

His photographs are presented not so much as "photographs" but as frozen moments in a mind; a more extreme, or more pure, form of the kind of expression found in his videos. Their force, like the videos, is more conceptual and emotional than "pictorial". Carras is not out to please the public; he is creating an experience of what it is like to *be*, and to experience a certain kind of perception and knowledge of the world and of being in that world.

I am very sympathetic to this kind of art, because it is basically what I do myself as a writer and word artist: form a vision of the universe as I experience it, with no regard to whether it "pleases" any given public or not.

I think that approach is clear in the collaborations we have done, in which Carras has added my texts and readings of those texts to his videos, using a variety of processes and approaches. Those works remain among my very favorite collaborations. In no way are my texts narratives of his images, nor are his images "illustrations" of my texts. Instead, the two dimensions expand the possibilities of each other in unexpected and fascinating ways. This is true collaboration.

It is also important to point out that Carras works in both French and English, and even with some of the texts I wrote in my own invented language of Globbolalia. His texts in French and English treat language not as "literature" but as a visionary or experiential medium much like the images he chooses for his visual work.

From his *Spampoems*:

You play Les oiseaux tristes  
You play Le petit corbeau  
You play Les nuages gris  
You play La route tordue  
You play, you play La mer trouble

You play the poet from the wine !