

ARTFORUM

Paris



Stéphane Couturier

GALERIE POLARIS
8, rue Saint-Claude
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In a visually and historically rich exhibition of large-format color photographs and a film, French artist Stéphane Couturier investigates the architectural legacy of Le Corbusier in the city of Chandigarh, India. Following the partition in 1947 of the British Indian Empire into India and Pakistan, Chandigarh developed rapidly in the 1950s under the supervision of Le Corbusier, whom Jawaharlal Nehru had commissioned to lead urban planning. Couturier's images of the city's local monuments, such as Chandigarh Secrétariat #1, 2007, and Chandigarh Haute Cour de Justice #1, 2007, as well as of residential areas, shown in Chandigarh Secteur #44, 2007, and Chandigarh Mohali, 2007, reflect both a documentary approach and a sensitivity to the organic nature of community—the latter often contrasting with the imposing idealism of Le Corbusier's modernist structures. Each image initially strikes the viewer as an impossible combination of perspective and geometry. However, a closer investigation reveals the works' realism, as various element—a father and son looking out from a balcony, colorful linens drying on a laundry line, and logically connected sequences of stairwells and passages—all quietly emerge. Couturier's film *Seoul Tanji*, 2006, and the ominous chugging rhythm of its sound track, elegantly capture urban decline. As the camera steadily pans housing blocks in Korea, swaths of gray from the buildings' decrepit facades fill the frame. In contrast to the show's other pieces, Couturier's film is not about celebrating the order of yesterday, but about anticipating its erosion tomorrow.

—Lillian Davies

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