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SOLIDES FRAGILES

04/10/2014 - 08/02/2015 PRESS KIT



Press release

SOLIDES FRAGILES

Exhibition from October 4, 2014 to February 8, 2015

Artists: Berger&Berger, Hreinn Fridfinnsson, Žilvinas Kempinas, Anthony McCall, Blinky Palermo, Laurent Pariente, Robert Ryman, Fred Sandback, Karin Sander, Elodie Seguin, Ettore Spalletti Curators: Marie-Noëlle Farcy, Clément Minighetti

In 1918, Kasimir Malevich produced his famous painting *White on White*, the highpoint of his Suprematist theory, and provided art history with one of the most radical works to contribute to thinking modernity. Of course, uncompromising theories from the start of the last century are now somewhat obsolete. The demonstration of an absolute "non-objective world" to study and understand the fullness of space has nonetheless opened the way for a more concrete and sensory art. Concerned with physical and sensory experience, the artworks in the exhibition *Fragile Solides* are biased towards immateriality, the visible radiation of forms, their emanation and their ability to resonate or to merge with their environment. Thus, atmosphere, light and reflection are not merely external factors but are an elemental part of the artwork. As ambient and active substances, they reveal the artwork. Conversely, the artwork in turn reveals space.

Fragile Solides thus underlines the inherent characteristics of materials that interact with their surroundings and those who observe them, creating unexpected effects that are instantaneous and sudden like the light sculptures by Antony McCall and the optical vibration of magnetic tapes by Žilvinas Kempinas. Other works, by artists such as Berger&Berger, whose luminous structure subtly plays on variations, maintain a formal relationship with the architecture of the space, revealing and amplifying the luminous ambience, whether natural or artificial. In line with the principle of merging with the space, the shimmering surface of Wall Piece by Karin Sander is actually a wall of the gallery patiently sanded, layer after layer, until it became as glossy and shiny as car bodywork.

Fred Sandback's taut lines describe space by hollowing out volumes and encouraging movement. More classically, Ettore Spalletti's velvety paintings with delicate chromatic values play with light and diffuse their colours while Laurent Pariente's tracings engraved on metal plates reveal themselves so as to better escape the eye when the point of view changes. On a different note, Elodie Seguin's sensitive and precise work was born in a reflection while the atmospheric work of Hreinn Fridfinnsson arose from the incidence of light. By linking a place with materials, both stable and evanescent, floating and solid, such as *Himmelsrichtungen* by Blinky Palermo or Robert Ryman's monochromes, the artists explore various possible physical and visual sensations through notions of appearance and disappearance, absorption and reflection, or vibration.

¹ The Non-Objective World: The Manifesto of Suprematism, Kasimir Malevitch, 1919-1922

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Address and information

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Opening hours

Wednesday - Friday: 11 am - 8 pm Saturday - Monday: 11 am - 6 pm Public holidays: 11 am - 6 pm Closed on Tuesday and on 25.12.2014

Entrance fee

Adults	5€/7€*
Under 26 years old, groups	3 € / 5 €*
Mudami card (valid 1 year for 2 persons)	50 €
Under 21 years old	free
Students under 26 years old	free
Wednesday, 6 pm - 8 pm	free
(*starting January 2015)	

Images

Available on request

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Mudam is financed by the Ministry of Culture.





Laurent P. Berger was born in 1972, Cyrille Berger in 1975. They live and work in Paris.

Artist and set designer Laurent P. Berger and his architect brother Cyrille have worked together since 2006 under the name Berger&Berger. Their joint productions include theatrical scenery, installations and architectural work, such as the extension of the Lambert Collection in Avignon which will be inaugurated in 2015. Their specific interests include the study of light, its distribution, its perception and the possibilities it offers. In 2010, for the *Le déclin du jour* project at Place du Marché Couvert in Metz in France, they investigated on the artificial nocturnal lighting of the inner city, its intensity and distribution as well as the dark areas that remain. They then proposed to reduce the usual city lighting to a single light source while installing some umbrellas which, paradoxically, offer shadow to the night.

For Solides Fragiles Berger & Berger will this time produce an artwork that seems to float in the gallery (from which it will take its geometrical form) while playing with its light conditions. Two hundred fluorescent tubes will be fixed to the top, half of them Warm White and the other half Cool White, in order to amplify variations created by the mix of perpetual daylight and artificial lighting emanating from the saw tooth roof by changing the lighting conditions. The observant visitor will notice the temperature of the light passing from warm to cool and the immediate effects on his or her perception and mood.



Berger&Berger, From the sun to the cloud, 2014 Simulation, © Berger&Berger

Work in the exhibition

From the sun to the cloud, 2014 Wood, fluorescent lamps with cold and warm light 700 × 700 cm Commission and production Mudam Luxembourg Courtesy Berger&Berger, Galerie Torri, Paris

HREINN FRIDFINNSSON

Hreinn Fridfinnsson was born in 1943 in Dölum (Iceland). He lives and works in Amsterdam.

"Hreinn Fridfinnsson is a poet. He 'speaks' of light, wind, landscape, rocks and crystals, gravity and feelings. [...] His work is fascinating because of its conceptual strength. Because of this, he is able to express the strongest emotions through the simplest means." (Jean-Christophe Ammann)

Icelander Hreinn Fridfinnsson's art is closely linked to the landscape and culture of his native island. As he himself puts it, it is within him, in his body, and is a fundamental part of his mental state. However, since the 1960s, Fridfinnsson's work has been of great formal and thematic diversity – purely conceptual textual artworks contrast with artworks of high sensory, or lyrical, dominance which appear to bear the traces of an open narrative. It is this poetic dimension that makes the viewer, like an active listener, the accomplice to a story that he can complement and prolong in his imagination. In doing so, the artist addresses a series of nods and winks to the viewer through various references to art history that cannot be missed. Fridfinnsson's art thus echoes Land Art or Arte Povera as well as the work of Marcel Duchamp and classical art.

The artworks selected for this exhibition express the subtle sensitivity of the artist to shape and materiality in his work. *Source* (2013), while simple-looking, is surprising because of the preciousness of its interior reminiscent of a reliquary, the emptiness of which might trigger possible associations in the viewer's mind. *For Light, Shadow and Dust* (1994–2014), a refined conceptual and visual play between the material and the immaterial and between the preciousness and triviality of the elements used, is also a meditative reflection on time, which is to be found in many of the artist's pieces. For *Suspended* (2000–2014), Fridfinnsson collected a multitude of short wooden slats used by house painters to mix colours. At regular intervals, but widely spaced over the wall they cover, these colour tints evoke fleeting, abstract images of vast empty spaces and question, in parallel, the very essence of painting.



Hreinn Fridfinnsson, Source, 2013
Courtesy Hreinn Fridfinnsson, Galerie Nordenhake, i8 Gallery

O Hreinn Fridfinnsson

Works in the exhibition

Suspended, 2000–2014 148 stirring sticks, paint Dimension adapted to space

Source, 2013 Cardboard box, palladium leaf $56 \times 37 \times 69$ cm

For Light, Shadow and Dust, 1994–2014 Gold foil, glass, 12 shelves 0.6 × 75 × 15 cm each

All works: Courtesy Hreinn Fridfinnsson, i8 Gallery, Reykjavik

ŽILVINAS KEMPINAS

Žilvinas Kempinas was born in 1969 Plungė (Lithuania). He lives and works in New York.

As a native of Lithuania, Žilvinas Kempinas undertook the first part of his art studies in Vilnius during the years marked by the fall of communism and continued studying, after a few years' break, at Hunter College in New York. A major part of his work is concerned with movement and space, the founding themes of the sculpture created by Kempinas in line with kinetic art, Op art and minimalism. This artistic research dating back to the 1960s introduced "real" movement into sculpture, visual stimulation and animation of space, thanks to the particular presence of the artworks – all characteristics that can be found in his work.

In the early 1990s, Kempinas worked for the first time with obsolete 35mm microfilm found in libraries, and so began using data carriers as artistic materials. However, he abandoned them in favour of video cassettes which proved to be more suitable. It is not so much the metaphorical component of information storage that draws his attention but rather its external appearance, its abundance, its low price, its lightness in weight at the limit of immateriality, and its shiny black colour. All these visual qualities enable the artworks to be staged liked drawings in motion; some literally dance in space through the use of fans while others, on the contrary, respond to a regular parallelism and strict linearity.

Kempinas always devises his artworks with the viewer in mind. His perception changes through moving around and not only gives the artwork its true meaning, but helps maintain its vital movement by circulating the air in the space. Via his project, that has been specially designed for the exhibition, Kempinas links the two exhibition spaces and livens up the main hallway, which is usually just a thoroughfare. The precise parallelism of the thin dark bands suspended in space is like a challenge to the feeling and perception of space. Their reflection, combined with the movement of the viewer, leads to a series of unexpected visual effects that can stimulate an intensified time-consciousness of the here and now.



Žilvinas Kempinas, *Catenaries*, 2014 © Žilvinas Kempinas

Works in the exhibition

Catenaries, 2014
Magnetic tapes
Variable dimensions
Commission and production Mudam Luxembourg
Courtesy Žilvinas Kempinas Galerija Vartai, Vilnius,
Galeria Leme, São Paulo

ANTHONY MCCALL

Anthony McCall was born in 1946 in St. Paul's Cray (England). He lives and works in New York.

"This film exists only in the present: the moment of projection. It refers to nothing beyond this real time. It contains no illusion. It is a primary experience, not secondary: i.e., the space is real, not referential; the time is real, not referential."

(Anthony McCall)

Line Describing a Cone (1973) is probably the most famous film in the series "Solid Light Films" by Anthony McCall. However, the artist only gained wide recognition in 2003, the year in which he resumed his artistic production after a break of more than twenty years. The 30-minute representation draws a sculpture of light in the projection space filled with mist and thereby combines the typical features of minimalism and so-called structural films.

Thus reduced to the basic component of film projection, namely the light beam, the formal and technical conditions of the film and its representation also become its main content. The projected circular form turns out to be the basic surface of an immaterial and conical light sculpture extending in space, the sleek appearance of which not only offers the viewer a reflection of his own perception, but truly encourages him to modulate its shape by moving around the room. The spatio-temporal perception of *Line Describing a Cone* thus leads to an experience of a heightened immediacy that is attached to the physical presence of the work and the viewer and is absolutely not reproducible.



Anthony McCall, *Line Describing a Cone*, 1973 Photo: Henry Graber, © Tate, London 2014

Works in the exhibition

Line Describing a Cone, 1973 16mm film, projection 30 min. 300 × 400 cm Tate Purchased: 2005

BLINKY PALERMO

Blinky Palermo was born in 1943 in Leipzig. He passed away in 1977 in Kurumba (Maldives).

During his artistic career that spanned only fifteen years, Blinky Palermo (whose real name was Peter Heisterkamp) emerged as a leading figure of the West German art scene. As a student of Joseph Beuys at the Academy of Fine Arts in Düsseldorf in 1960, he found himself in a highly productive and innovative environment. The central theme of his paintings was the tension between object and image, between the real and the artificial, between abstract content and concrete form.

The works on display are from two major series of his work. Through his *Stoffbildern* (1967–1972), which were often left untitled, Palermo probed the quality of the painting as object and questioned his own role as a painter. The use of cheap materials, the abandonment of the frame and the creation of a unity of form and colour, thanks to his renunciation of colour application, also allowed him to address certain conventional limits of art and expand the conception and understanding of painting.

Himmelsrichtungen I (1976) and Himmelsrichtungen II (1976) are from the final phase of production by the artist who lived in New York from 1973 to 1976. This period inspired other similar works, including series such as To the People of New York City (1976) and Times of the Day (1975–1976). All of these pieces consist of painted aluminum panels, each separated by the width of a panel and hanging at a certain distance from the wall, in front of which they appear to float. Palermo, who once posed the question "what might be achieved through images", here puts the pictorial question in the foreground, without sacrificing the painting's quality of being an object. Although the sequence of colours and the harmony of tones are partly intuitive, the four squares of Himmelsrichtungen are also meaningful. The viewer's attention is drawn to the fact that in the culture and beliefs, closely linked to nature, of Native American tribes such as the Cheyenne, a palette of specific colours is associated with the cardinal points: East, for example, is represented by white and South by the colour red, while West is yellow and North is black.



Blinky Palermo, Ohne Titel (Mittelblau – Hellblau – Mittelblau), 1968 © Photo: Rémi Villagqi

Works in the exhibition

Ohne Titel (Mittelblau – Hellblau – Mittelblau), 1968 Industrially tinted cotton 200 × 200 cm Collection Mudam Luxembourg Donation 1998 – Banque européenne d'investissement Apport FOCUNA

Himmelsrichtungen I, 1976 Acrylic on aluminium 26,7 × 21 × 1,7 cm each Museum Ludwig Köln / Sammlung Ludwig

Himmelsrichtungen II, 1976 Acrylic on aluminium 26,7 × 21 × 0,3 cm each Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe

LAURENT PARIENTE

Laurent Pariente was born in 1962 in Oran (Algeria). He lives and works in New York.

Faced with Untitled (2006), large format square artworks by Laurent Pariente, the first question to arise is that of genre. Thin metal plates of aluminum, copper or brass coated with lacquered colour, are worked on with dry point, a method of intaglio etching. The dense intertwining of delicate lines following the circular movement of the hand produces a regular "all-over" immersive effect. At first glance, these works seem to reconcile painting and the graphic arts. But, at the same time, the structured surface and its way of reflecting the light in the etched lines provoke in the viewer a truly tactile moving gaze, like when one "touches" a sculpture with one's eyes. Pariente emphasizes the importance of these engraved plates which opened up a luminous space for him and thus inaugurated his "relation to the wall". The wall which, for the artist, "is also the opening of a new space" and a defining experience for his other work.

The colour prints are indeed directly related to his labyrinthine installations, like the one produced in 2008 for Mudam's Grand Hall, through which the visitor made his way, immersed in the heart of a multitude of colourful translucent surfaces. Whether it is the furrows of his engravings on metal or the volumes of his white or coloured interior architecture striking a regular pace, Pariente's artworks create an environment with no beginning or end. The gaze is forced to wander, no opportunity being presented for it to halt or even linger, leading to the destabilization and questioning of spatial and pictorial perception.



Laurent Pariente, Sans titre, 2006 © Photo: André Morin

Works in the exhibition

Sans titre, 2006 Drypoint on aluminium, varnish 226 × 226 cm each

Sans titre, 2006 Drypoint on copper 184 × 184 cm

Sans titre, 2006 Drypoint on brass 184 × 184 cm

All works: Collection Mudam Luxembourg Donation 2013 Laurent Pariente

ROBERT RYMAN

Robert Ryman was born in 1930 in Nashville (Tennessee). He lives and works in New York.

At first sight, American artist Robert Ryman's body of work may seem fairly monotonous. For over 50 years he has made the monochrome his field of experimentation and applies the colour white on square formats in most of them. But, on closer inspection, the complexity and richness of his approach can be better perceived: Ryman explores not only the essence of painting beyond the multiple external given conditions, but also pursues his main artistic goal of "making visible" and increasing the awareness of the viewer. The colour white, when seen as a working tool, does not serve as a representation; its neutrality draws the eye to the conditions - the what and how - of its physical existence. Ryman has varied the application of paint, the painting materials, the frames and canvases and the format, along with the hanging method and lighting of the pieces, in every conceivable way.

The pieces in the series "Seven Aquatints" (1972) were the first prints by Ryman. The artist experiments with various formats and numerous aquatint processes. Again, the colour white is the basic component. Ryman explains this as follows: "My aquatints are not white because I'm interested in making white prints, but because white printing is visually more relevant. If I used black ink, the printed surfaces would become forms and the aquatint could not be seen so clearly."

For the same reasons, the monochrome aspect is not the central theme of the large format work Chapter (1981). The "absence of colour" directs the gaze to the structure of the painted surface, to the edges that reveal the support of the painting and to a detail dear to Ryman, especially in the 1980s: the type of hanging method, the resulting shadows and thus its location within the exhibition space.

Works in the exhibition

Untitled, 1972 Aquatint on paper 54 × 55 cm $30 \times 35 \text{ cm}$ $61 \times 61 \text{ cm}$ $35 \times 34,3 \text{ cm}$ 55.3 × 54.5 cm 53×54 cm $29.7 \times 30 \text{ cm}$ Tate Purchased: 1982

Chapter, 1981 Oil on linen, 4 metallic clips 223,5 × 213,5 cm Centre Pompidou, Paris Musée national d'art moderne / Centre de création industrielle Purchased: 1982

Fred Sandback was born in 1943 in Bronxville (New York). He passed away in 2003 in New York.

Fred Sandback's art is unclassifiable. His artworks defy the usual categories, being neither installations nor undoubtedly sculptures, in many respects Sandback himself spoke first of "construction" before also using the term "sculpture" while stressing that his almost immaterial works, unlike traditional sculptures, "lack an inner side". Related to minimalism, his work is also part of the sculpture as "drawing" in space tradition. Thanks to the certificates that describe each of his artworks and which Sandback compared to musical scores, it is possible, even after the death of the artist, to re-stage and re-interpret them with a certain freedom.

Sandback's artworks, first devised with wire and later with acrylic thread, occupy and configure the space by truly changing the atmosphere. Although they are related to him and conditioned by him, they do not comment on him, or as the artist puts it, they do not tell "[...] stories about him. They are just there." Sandback thus seeks a balance that lies on the boundary between the autonomous art object and an artwork arising from the place. He is looking for a neutral space he calls "pedestrian space" where the artwork is shown "next to all the other things in the world and not on a demarcating plinth." What interests Sandback is the physical space in which a minimal artistic intervention, by exercising its particular presence, can be experienced and enjoyed by the viewer who goes there.

The two artworks by Sandback on display are different and relate to an evolution going from the adjacent space included in the closed form to an open form, fully integrating the space in the vibrations of the work. While *Untitled (Sculptural Study, Six-part Right-angled Construction)* (1976/2014) distances the spectator from one-dimensional linearity and leads him towards the imaginary two and three dimensionality of surface and space, *Broadway Boogie Woogie (Sculptural Study, Twenty-two-part Vertical Construction)* (1991/2014) moves towards a rhythmic insertion of space that is henceforth much less obviously demarcated around the work. In contrast to the visual austerity of the first piece, this colourful tribute addressed to one of the famous last paintings of Piet Mondrian, is playfully and flippantly spontaneous.



Fred Sandback, Broadway Boogie Woogie (Sculptural Study, Twenty-two-part Vertical Construction), 1991/2006 © 2014 Fred Sandback Archive

Works in the exhibition

Broadway Boogie Woogie (Sculptural Study, Twenty-two-part Vertical Construction), 1991/2014 Red, yellow and blue acrylic yarn Dimension adapted to space Private collection

Untitled (Sculptural Study Six-part Right-angled Construction), 1976/2014 Black acrylic yarn Dimension adapted to space Fred Sandback Estate

KARIN SANDER

Karin Sander was born in 1957 in Bensberg (Germany). She lives and works in Berlin and Zurich.

Harald Welzer insists that Karin Sander is "the artist who most intensely brings out the latent poetry present in the things that surround us. [...] While her work may appear to be disparate at first glance, it actually revolves around the following question: To what extent can change of state be reduced whilst creating something completely different?" Also, Sander constantly questions the importance of the intervention of the artist in the production of an artwork.

Canvases from the *Gebrauchsbilder* series exhibited for some time outdoors, sometimes in a public space, as well as *Mailed Paintings*, sent by post, only bear the traces of their own history. Similarly, she regularly offers visitors to her exhibitions the ability to create a small sculpture of themselves through the almost fully-automated 3D printing process. Her influence on these statuettes, which are continually growing in number, is also reduced to a minimum to give a prominent place to individual choice concerning self-representation. For her *Zeigen* experiment, that has often been repeated and brings together the work of invited artists, Sander also stands back to make way for the artworks "shown" which are only verbally described by the authors and projected in an imaginary way in front of the "inner eye" of the viewer via an audio system.

All of these pieces seek the autonomous and creative participation of the viewer through a simple but elaborate intervention by the artist. This is also the case of the *Wall Piece* produced for the *Solides Fragiles* exhibition. Karin Sander's *Wall Pieces* are works of art resulting from subtraction rather than addition of matter. This work has been carried out since 1993 in various places and in many different formats and involves the progressive sanding of wall paint using increasingly fine sandpaper until a smooth, shiny surface is obtained. These delicate works by Sander, which only become apparent through careful observation, vaguely reveal the surrounding space in a bright white reflection and present an ever-changing image to the viewer. They are immaterial in their essence, consisting of the altered state of a given space. The wall, which is usually the support for hanging an artwork, becomes the artwork itself.



Karin Sander, Wall Piece 220 x 170, 3 Parts, 2014 © Photo: Karin Sander

Work in the exhibition

Wall Piece 180 × 540, 2014
Polished wall paint
180 × 540 cm
Production Mudam Luxembourg
Courtesy Esther Schipper Gallery, Berlin

ÉLODIE SEGUIN

Élodie Seguin was born in 1984 in Paris, where she lives and works.

Élodie Seguin thinks of her art as work in constant development, in a perpetual state of becoming. Her artworks shy away from any definitive categorization. They combine elements of painting, sculpture and installation, presenting aspects of minimalism, the readymade and in situ art without ever being absorbed by these classifications. Formally reduced to the essential and often composed of "poor" (albeit new) materials, they have, in the words of the artist, their own "grammar" according to which they are arranged with great precision. Seguin attaches importance to the equivocal nature and dissolved limits of her work, the discretion and restraint of which are essential to allow the viewer to interact more freely. Despite her interest in painting, one of her main questions concern "how to escape from painting?" Seguin explores the boundary between painting and sculpture, conducts experiments on various painted surfaces and uses her own mix of colours for the pictorial parts of her artworks which do not allow themselves to be absorbed by photography or linguistic description.

The work on display, *Espace de projection* (2012), brings together all these questions and suggests a subtle answer: the glass wall through the middle of the exhibition space separates the cardboard tubes and small format paintings, elements commonly found in an artist's studio, from a large pink monochrome, behind which appears, on the upper side, a blue surface. Through a play of reflections precisely superimposed on scattered objects, which appear to have been placed randomly, Seguin takes the opposite stance from Frank Stella's famous maxim "What you see is what you see" and makes it clear to the attentive viewer that what he sees is only perceivable through reflection.



Élodie Seguin, *Espace de projection*, 2012 © Photo: Art Basel Sabine Delachaise

Work in the exhibition

Espace de projection, 2012
Paint, glass, wood, paper, metal, plastic
308 × 345 × 568 cm
Private collection
Courtesy Galerie Jocelyn Wolff, Paris

ETTORE SPALLETTI

Ettore Spalletti was born in 1940 in Cappelle sul Tavo (Italy) where he lives and works.

Despite the elementary and very simplified forms in his work, the Italian artist Ettore Spalletti is generally less associated with the minimal art of his contemporaries than with the long line of traditional Italian art dating back to the frescoes of Giotto. His artwork, mainly in the fields of painting, sculpture and installation, arises from a subtle process requiring great technical skill. Spalletti's paintings, usually produced in white, pale pink or blue – his favourite colours – take on an ethereal and elusive character due to the special treatment of the surface. Following a long process, the artist applies up to twelve layers of a mixture of oil, gypsum and moist pigment to the canvas. When it has dried, he sands the surface until it is light and satiny, with an almost immaterial aspect.

Moreover, Spalletti likes giving volume to his paintings so that they are somewhere between painting and sculpture; either by revealing the sides of the paintings, in other words the stretcher, by hanging them at an angle, or through their positioning in space. Their presence alone changes the perception of the exhibition space, their visibility thereby raised to the level of an experience in which the criterion of beauty so often decried by the Modernists plays a major role. Obtaining immediacy and evidence of Beauty is a major concern of his art. Spalletti pursues what could be called a Platonic approach because it is almost impossible to further simplify the forms he employs; they are pure forms, "ideas" in the Platonic sense." (Roland Mönig)



Ettore Spalletti, Senza titolo, azzurro tenue, 2012 © Ettore Spalletti / Courtesy Galerie Lelong

Works in the exhibition

Senza titolo, azzurro tenue, 2012 $150 \times 150 \times 4$ cm

La luce e il colore, grigio, 2012 $150 \times 150 \times 5$ cm

Senza titolo, rosa tenue, 2012 $150 \times 150 \times 4$ cm

Senza titolo, 2002 150 × 300 × 4 cm

All works: Pigments on wood Courtesy Ettore Spalletti, Galerie Lelong, Paris