

*As the cost of living in Paris creeps ever higher, all those who don't count Palm Pilots and investment portfolios among their possessions are forced to improvise in their search for accommodation. One of the better options is to squat.*

*Under French law, police cannot evict people who occupy a vacant building until the owner completes proper paperwork and a decision is made by a justice. This can take months. A further help are the country's winter habitation laws which forbid the eviction of anyone between November 1 and March 15.*

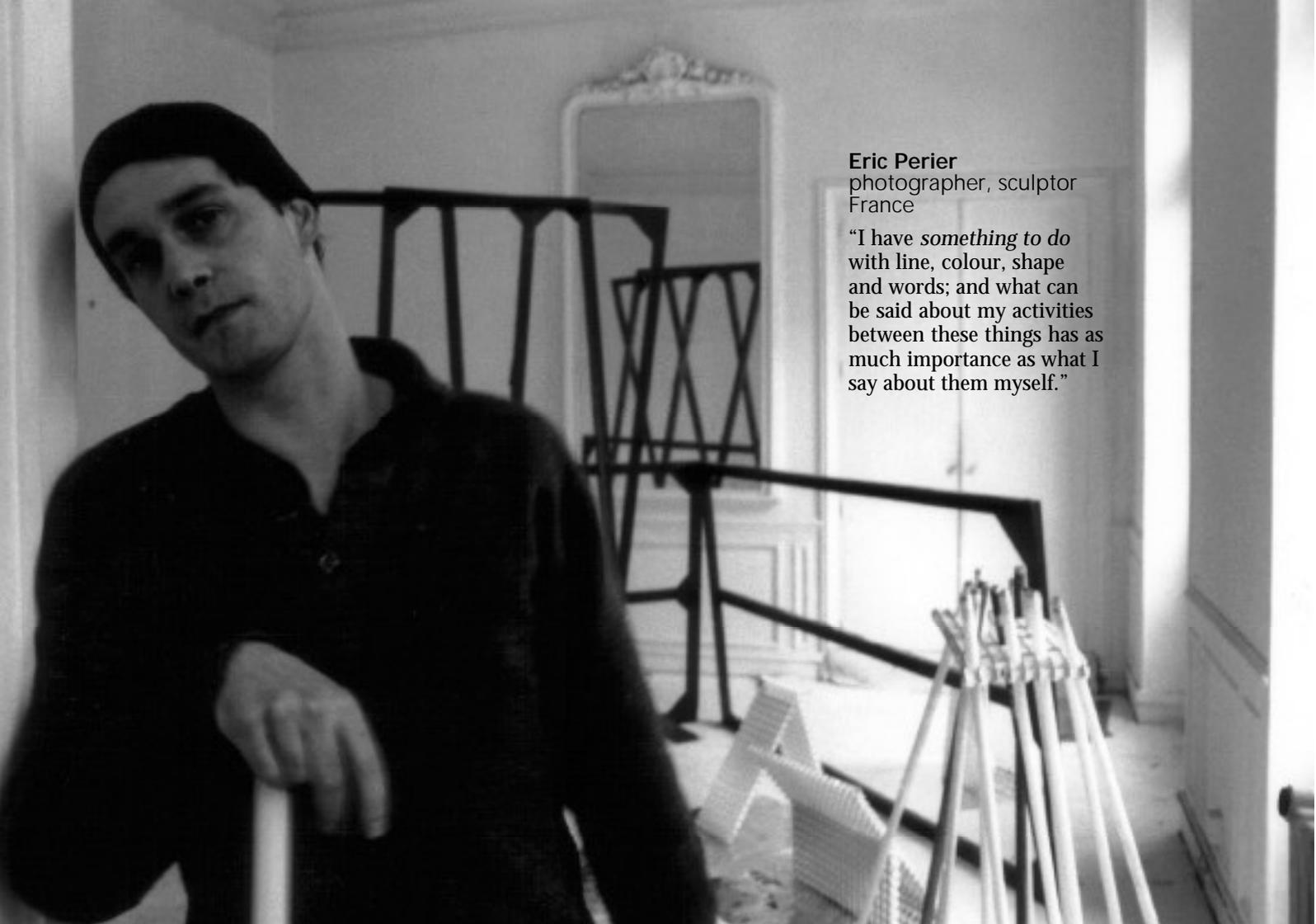
*Though the laws exist to protect the homeless and the poor, artists have used them to carve out creative space. Squats have been home to everything from circuses to theatre groups and during the recent mayoral elections the socialist party even promised to maintain five artist squats or 'emerging spaces' as they're called in political circles.*

*At the forefront of the movement to legitimize the squat is the Châteaudun project. Located several blocks north of the fabled Paris Opera house, the seven-floor building was occupied by artists in May 1999 and has provided working space for more than 150 people. Artists can apply for a two-month stay and the building acts as an incubator, a living tool that transforms to meet the creative needs of the residents. There is a theatre, a gallery and a lounge on the ground floor; photo and video installations on the first floor; research space on the second floor; the In Fact gallery on the third floor; and private ateliers in the rest of the building.*

*Unlike other artist squats, Châteaudun can only be seen by appointment. The squat can be visited by emailing [infact\\_51@hotmail.com](mailto:infact_51@hotmail.com) or calling 06.15.35.83.71.*

**Châteaudun**  
art instead  
of emptiness

photos by  
gayle brownlee



**Eric Perier**  
photographer, sculptor  
France

“I have *something to do* with line, colour, shape and words; and what can be said about my activities between these things has as much importance as what I say about them myself.”



**Juli About**

painter, installation artist, France

“I want them to look. To look. I want them to distinguish things. I want them to listen, to experience. I want them to search, to ask questions of themselves. And I would like them to think that they don’t look enough. I’m not looking enough. Let them think they’re not listening enough. Not imagining enough. I am not imaginative enough.”

**Emmanuel Patron**  
playwright, France

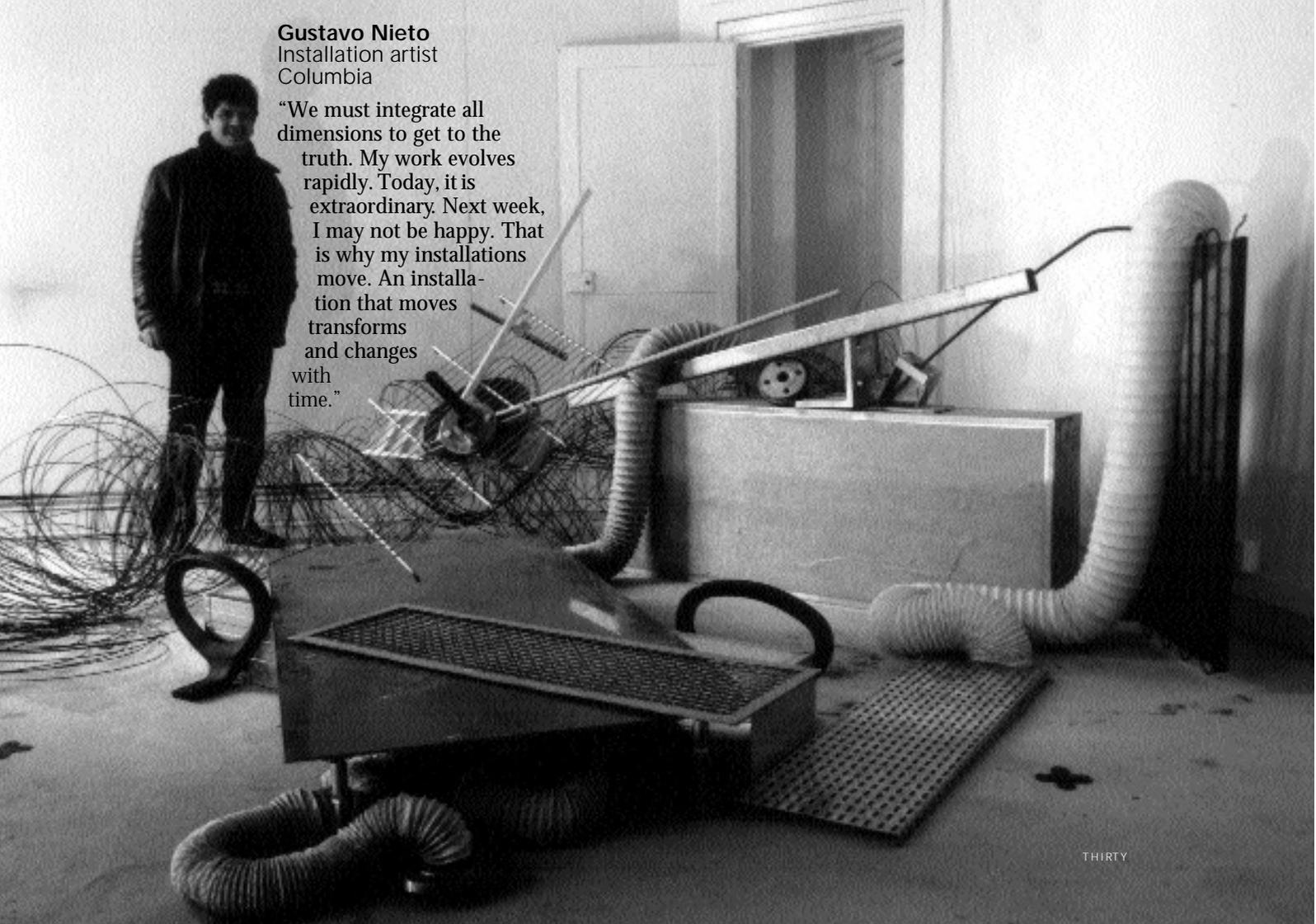
“Working in Paris  
In the actors’ world  
The stakes you risk, the looks  
You receive  
Perhaps a mantle of dignity  
The chances of success  
The life expectancy.”





**Sacha Lev**  
painter, Russia

“There is the impression that everything has been done. That is maybe not the case with painting. Each person has their unique vision and that gives hope that we can advance.”



**Gustavo Nieto**  
Installation artist  
Columbia

“We must integrate all dimensions to get to the truth. My work evolves rapidly. Today, it is extraordinary. Next week, I may not be happy. That is why my installations move. An installation that moves transforms and changes with time.”