

Penser l'image projetée dans une salle d'exposition, non pas dans le prolongement d'une histoire du cinéma, en examinant les paradoxes du *temps exposé*¹, mais du point de vue de l'expérience de l'espace qu'elle active, tel est le premier enjeu de l'ouvrage de Mathilde Roman, critique d'art, lauréate de l'Association internationale des critiques d'art (AICA-France), commissaire d'expositions et professeure au Pavillon Bosio. Son second défi consiste à conceptualiser

la « scénographie » comme véritable dimension d'un certain nombre d'œuvres (vidéo) contemporaines, en détachant cette notion de ses connotations théâtrales pour y voir plutôt une invitation à « habiter l'exposition », titre du livre dont est issu l'extrait traduit ici.

L'essai qui constitue la première partie de l'ouvrage donne un cadre historique et théorique aux expériences des corps (des spectateurs) dans l'espace « habité » par l'image projetée. Ni *White Cube*, ni *Black Box*, l'espace de déploiement des œuvres vidéo appelle à l'expérience, dans ses dimensions corporelle, sensorielle, relationnelle. Ou, plus précisément, *les espaces*, puisque Mathilde Roman a réuni dans une seconde partie de l'ouvrage dix-huit entretiens avec des artistes qui révèlent autant de manières d'éprouver l'exposition : Dan Graham, Carolee Schneemann, Tony Oursler, Doug Aitken, Isaac Julien, Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Julian Rosefeldt,

To consider the image projected in an exhibition space not as the continuation of film history, through the examination of the paradoxes of *exhibited time*,¹ but from the viewpoint of the experience of space it activates, is the first issue explored by Mathilde Roman in her book. She is an art critic, the recipient of a prize from the Association internationale des critiques d'art (AICA-France), a curator and a teacher at the Pavillon Bosio. The book's second line of inquiry is the conceptualisation of "scenography" as a fully-fledged dimension of numerous

contemporary (video) artworks, by separating the concept from its theatrical connotations, seeing it rather as a way of "inhabiting the exhibition" [*habiter l'exposition*]*—*the title of the book from which this excerpt is taken.

This essay, which makes up the first part of the volume, offers a historic and theoretical framework to the experience of (the viewers') bodies in the space "inhabited" by the projected image. The space in which video works unfold, neither White Cube nor Black Box, stimulates experiences in their corporeal, sensorial, and relational dimensions. In fact, these spaces are plural, as in the second part, the book reproduces 18 interviews with artists, each one revealing their own way of perceiving exhibitions: Dan Graham, Carolee Schneemann, Tony Oursler, Doug Aitken, Isaac Julien, Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Julian Rosefeldt, Thomas Demand, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Xavier Veilhan and Alexis Bertrand, Laurent Grasso, Jordi Colomer, Anri Sala, Mika Rottenberg, Laure Prouvost, Angelica Mesiti, Liv Schulman, Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz.

Thomas Demand, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Xavier Veilhan et Alexis Bertrand, Laurent Grasso, Jordi Colomer, Anri Sala, Mika Rottenberg, Laure Prouvost, Angelica Mesiti, Liv Schulman, Pauline Boudry et Renate Lorenz.

Cette structure bipartite du livre qui multiplie les va-et-vient entre le texte de Mathilde Roman et les entretiens avec les artistes défend ainsi une pratique de la critique *comme* relation, un modèle d'« écrire en collaboration »².

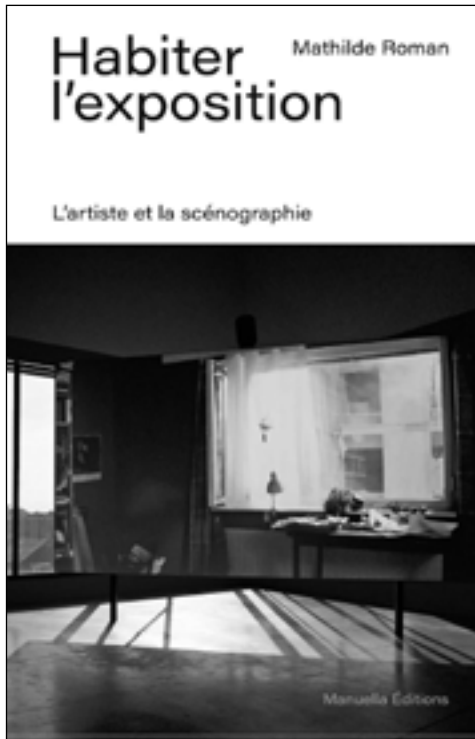
Elitza Dulguerova

1. Païni, Dominique. *Le Temps exposé : le cinéma de la salle au musée*, Paris : Cahiers du cinéma, 2002, (Essais)

2. Le chapitre « Ecrire en collaboration » (p. 91-93) conclut la première partie de l'ouvrage et introduit les « Entretiens » recueillis par Mathilde Roman (p. 95-263).

This bipartite structure, which moves back and forth between Mathilde Roman's writings and her interviews with artists, exemplifies the practice of critique as relation, as a model of "collaborative writing".²

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1. Païni, Dominique. *Le Temps exposé: le cinéma de la salle au musée*, Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 2002, (Essais)

2. The chapter entitled "Ecrire en collaboration" [Collaborative writing] (p. 91-93) brings the first part of the book to a close and introduces the "Entretiens" [Interviews] conducted by Mathilde Roman (p. 95-263).

Mathilde Roman

Introduction

When I entered the gallery of the M museum in Louvain, Belgium, where *The Wind* (2001-2002), a video installation by Eija-Liisa Ahtila, was exhibited, I was immediately struck by the way in which the footage, which was shot in Finland, intimately fit in with the urban landscape visible through the windows overlooking the rooftops. The space had not been converted into a white cube or a black box: instead of neutralising or closing it off by painting its walls black or white, the walls were red, and some of the windows were opened onto the city, creating reverse shots and luminous atmospheres, closely connecting the scenes onscreen with the outside view. The character's emotions—a woman oppressed by judgments and experiencing how unstable the boundaries between her psychological state and the physical reality of her house are—overflowed, flooding the entire space. Her feelings of insecurity and her disorientation create a rupture: the walls start to tremble, the shelves topple over, and the wind noisily rushes in. The vision of reality is reorganised from the viewpoint of this broken-down subject, who expresses no surprise as she witnesses her environment collapsing. The narrative is split onto four separate screens which prompt the architectural context to interact with the footage, conveying contagion from outside into the museum. I took a picture, which has become the cover of this book, in order to try and understand the intensity of the relationships between fictional and real spaces, as well as to question the ability of artworks to “inhabit” an exhibition. One can be inhabited by an emotion, therefore, what does it mean for an artwork to inhabit an exhibition? What are the shifts this generates within the aesthetic regime and for us, as viewers, as we experience art? In concrete terms, how do these connections occur with such intensity in exhibitions? Throughout my research on these issues, scenography, a seldom recognised

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dimension of the field of contemporary art, was a key element. The role of scenography, a technical tool as well as an ideological position in the fragile balance between bodies, spaces, and artworks that make it possible to create exhibitions as environments, needed to be explored.

The concept of inhabitation evokes turmoil and life, and adds a perceptual depth to the aesthetic experience, regenerating the logics of contagion. The viewer is understood as a living, moving body, as perceptions impregnated and stimulated by their encounter with artworks, designed as open, embedded in human space and time, and defined by their reception. This approach is very dissimilar from the position of American art historian Michael Fried, who argues in favour of the artwork's quality of absorption and its autonomy in relation to the viewer; as well as from the standpoint of Hal Foster, another major American art theorist. Claire Bishop, a British performance theorist, notes the irony of a situation where, in order to protect the aesthetic experience from the increasingly strong presence of the regimes of life inside the museum, Hal Foster asserts the fundamentally non-alive nature of the artwork: "Skeptical of the institutional rehabilitation of performance art as a strategy to 'activate' the museum, he argues that the work of art was never alive in the first place".¹ By contrast, the temporal and easily hypnotic nature of moving images, linked to the *dispositifs* and rhythms of projection, makes it a particularly interesting medium for creating strong perceptive situations that flood bodies and affects. Admittedly, the viewer's gaze occasionally hovers over the images without dwelling on them, remaining on the surface; but she may also immerse herself in the artwork, exceeding by far the time she devotes to other types of work. This fact may be interpreted as the sign of a passive and stupefied relationship to images, inspired by the media which surround us in our everyday life, or as the sign of our tiredness during exhibitions visits, which, due to the proliferation of biennales, have become something of a marathon. When entering a space offering

1. Bishop, Claire. "Death Becomes Her: Maria Hassabi at the Museum", *Parkett*, no. 98, 2018, quoting Hal Foster, "In Praise of Dead Art", *Art Newspaper*, 18 September 2015, reprinted in the final chapter of Hal Foster, *Bad New Days*, London: Verso, 2015.

comfortable seats or even just a thick and welcoming carpet, as well as a quality visual and audio immersion, viewers are sometimes guided only by their desire to rest for a bit. But the work's influence may be so strong that it disrupts perceptual points of reference and overwhelms the usual forms of the aesthetic experience. The American author Don DeLillo was struck by this fact, and included it in his novel *Point Omega* (2010), in which a man spends all his waking hours at the MoMA in New York, from opening to closing time, in order not to miss a thing of Douglas Gordon's installation *24 Hour Psycho* (1993)—a version of Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) slowed down to last 24 hours. The descriptions of the character's distracted state of mind accurately depict the perceptual hold exerted by moving images, especially if the slowed-down or fast-tracked rhythm erases all narrative points of reference, inextricably interlacing experienced time and fictional time. But the conceptual power of *24 Hour Psycho* produces a constant toing and froing between a hypnotic, addictive relationship and a conscious examination of the mechanisms of cinema and the effects of image flows. The French video historian Françoise Parfait explores these issues in her paper, "La projection vidéo : un dispositif mental" [Video-projection: a mental dispositif], laying the groundwork for an analysis of the figure of the viewer. She describes "informed viewers, who can therefore draw on their *attention*, assert their *presence*, choose a *posture*, based on dispositifs *into* which they enter instead of simply gazing at them, at the intersection of *project*, *projector* and *projection*".² With, on the one hand, the aesthetics of absorption, and on the other the aesthetics of leisure, distraction, and non-authoritarian creation, exhibited moving images operate in the margins of each artwork's own space, in order to create meeting points, moments of projection and times of withdrawal.

My research, therefore, examines the way in which moving images appropriate scenography as

2. Parfait, Françoise. «La projection vidéo : un dispositif mental», *ImagoDrome : des images mentales dans l'art contemporain*, Blou: Monografik éditions, 2010, p. 188 (edited by Alexandre Castant)

a tool for creating relations and orchestration rather than as a device for closure and perceptual isolation. It is strongly connected to parallel investigations into the presence of regimes of life inside the museum (performance, dance, moving images), through exhibitions, publications and educational projects.³ My theoretical research is led in parallel with curatorial projects, my work as an art critic, with the artworks themselves as well as exhibition processes. This book is comprised of an introductory essay and 18 interviews with artists⁴ I chose for their approach to the exhibition as form or to the scenography dispositif as an extension of the artwork, as well as for their exploration of the moving image's ability to construct situations that are at once open and rooted.

The approach to scenography I will discuss here is connected to the necessary transformation of the immaterial flows of the moving image into temporal objects placed in space and intended for bodies. The exhibition is designed as a situated whole, an environment intended for affected perceptions, in which the materiality of space is treated as an indispensable medium. The relationship to places, contexts, the specificity of atmospheres and the institutions' management model is reinvested into the processes that aim at creating meeting zones for artworks and bodies, a *continuum* of relations rather than an accumulation of isolated heterogeneities. Staging space in this way, through the creation of relations and exhibitions as environments, is a way of thinking about and offering "loci of reciprocity" inspired by those Donna Haraway envisions between different species.⁵ Artworks and viewers enter relationships just as humans and non-humans do, becoming "living co-producers" and "cultivating their response-ability" and their ability to react, to live in the world by deepening it and exploring the present as a shared future. We should inhabit the exhibition in the same way we should "inhabit trouble with Donna Haraway",⁶ by reflecting on the ways in which we make do with space, just as much as we produce it, fully connecting aesthetics and politics.

3. See two exhibition projects: "Danse, danse, danse", Nouveau Musée National de Monaco, 2016, in collaboration with Benjamin Laugier, that mixed the exhibition with performance pieces, workshops and a symposium ("La Place du corps", later published by Pavillon Bosio, 2019); and "Performance TV" at the Maison d'art Bernard Anthonioz, Nogent-sur-Marne, 2018, an exhibition and an e-book published by FNAGP. Since 2006, I am a teacher at the Pavillon Bosio, the school of art and scenography of the city of Monaco, where we lead a research program on exhibition scenography as form: www.pavillonbosio.com. Also see the publication I edited with Jacinto Lageira, *Corps et images: œuvres, dispositifs et écrans contemporains*, Sesto San Giovanni: Mimé-sis, 2017.

4. Dan Graham, Carolee Schneemann, Tony Oursler, Doug Aitken, Isaac Julien, Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Julian Rosefeldt, Thomas Demand, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Xavier Veilhan and Alexis Bertrand, Laurent Grasso, Jordi Colomer, Anri Sala, Mika Rottenberg, Laure Prouvost, Pauline Boudry et Renate Lorenz, Angelica Mesiti, Liv Schulman

5. Haraway, Donna. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2016, chap. 1

6. *Habiter le trouble avec Donna Haraway*, Bellevaux: Dehors, 2019. Edited by Florence Caeymaex, Vinciane Despret and Julien Pieron

In the exhibition space, the *loci* of reciprocity are the artist's, in collaboration with the scenography constructed between the artworks that inhabit the space and the perceptions of passing viewers. Of course, it can be as complex to create encounters in the exhibition space as it is to connect human and non-human species. In both cases, the crux of the matter is to envisage other relational modes in which "We relate, know, think, world, and tell stories though and with other stories, worlds, knowledge, thinkings, yearnings".⁷ This contradicts the legacy of the liberal understanding of the exhibition, which, according to the analysis of German historian Dorothea von Hantelmann, attracts a steady flow of viewers but displays very few instances of collective bonds or authentic gatherings.

7. Haraway, Donna. *Staying with the Trouble*, *op. cit.*, p. 97; quoted in *Habiter le trouble avec Donna Haraway*, *op. cit.*, p. 47

The exhibition is a social ritual that gained currency at the beginning of the 20th century, at the same time as our consumerist and individualistic society. Experiencing the artwork, therefore, is understood as a subjective capitalizable relationship which should be protected from everyday affects for purposes of optimisation. The architectural gesture of the museum as sign, externally imposing a symbolic conception centred on a unique vision, is used as an emblem in public space as well as a battlement to protect aesthetic value. Although cultural democratisation entailed a major increase in museum visits, the time spent in front of each work of art only lasts a few seconds at best, and the visitor's gaze may merely float over a collection of works glimpsed as he moves through the gallery. Temporary exhibitions are indisputably more visited than permanent collections, since it is not a specific work viewers comes to see but a particular perspective on works brought together for a given duration. Visitors come to seize a chance to see, in a moment of brief and furtive amazement, conditioned by an array of codes structuring the relationships to art and the museum. Faced with this societal reality, scenography is a precious instrument for diversion, in order to try and transform the exhibition into a community ritual, a space for

collective experience constituting social ties, in which visitors may feel affected, where they may experience an extended present, connecting them to others. Echoing Dorothea von Hantelmann, I believe that, through examining the format of the exhibition and the dimension of scenography, one can experience collective ritual, connected to wider current issues of reconciliation, reparation and reconstruction of relationships that are neither dominant nor subjugating.

Translated from the French
by Phoebe Hadjimarkos Clarke