



**Graduate
Symposium
Compendium**

2017



COVER:

Pierre Huyghe, *Streamside Day*, 2003, Event, celebration, October 11, 2003,
Streamside Knolls, NY, USA, Super 16mm film transferred to digital Betacam, color,
sound. Courtesy of the artist.



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Nasher Sculpture Center

Located in the heart of the Dallas Arts District, the Nasher Sculpture Center is home to the Raymond and Patsy Nasher Collection, one of the finest collections of modern and contemporary sculpture in the world. The longtime dream of the late Raymond and Patsy Nasher, the museum was designed by world-renowned architect Renzo Piano, in collaboration with landscape architect Peter Walker, to seamlessly integrate the indoor galleries with the outdoor garden spaces, creating a museum experience unlike any other in the world. In addition to gallery spaces, the Center contains an auditorium, education and research facilities, a cafe, and an award-winning store. On view in the light-filled galleries and amid the garden grounds are rotating works from the Collection, which features more than 300 masterpieces by Calder, Giacometti, Matisse, Picasso, Rodin, and many more modern masters, as well as rotating installations by celebrated and emerging contemporary artists. In dialogue with the Collection and special exhibitions, the Nasher also offers an elevated series of special programs, including artist talks, lecture programs, contemporary chamber music concerts, artist-led classes, and exclusive member events, all meant to enrich the museum experience and highlight the Center as a catalyst for the study, installation, conservation, and appreciation of modern and contemporary sculpture.

Nasher Prize

In April 2015, the Nasher Sculpture Center announced the creation of the Nasher Prize, the most significant award in the world dedicated exclusively to contemporary sculpture. It is presented annually to a living artist who has had an extraordinary impact on the understanding of the art form. Each winner is chosen by a jury of renowned museum directors, curators, artists, and art historians who have an expertise in the field, and varying perspectives on the

subject, and receives a \$100,000 prize, conferred in April of each year. In addition, each winner receives an award object designed by the architect of the Nasher Sculpture Center, Renzo Piano. The Nasher Sculpture Center is one of a few institutions worldwide dedicated exclusively to the exhibition and study of modern and contemporary sculpture. As such, the prize is an apt extension of the museum's mission and its commitment to advancing developments in the field.

Attendant with the award aspect of the Nasher Prize is a series of public programs called Nasher Prize Dialogues. These panel discussions, lectures, and symposia are intended to foster international awareness of sculpture and to stimulate discussion and debate. Nasher Prize Dialogues are held yearly in cities around the world, offering engagement with various audiences, and providing myriad perspectives and insight into the ever-expanding field of sculpture.

The inaugural winner of the Nasher Prize was Colombian artist Doris Salcedo.

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Foreword

In the fall of 2016, the Nasher Sculpture Center announced an open call for graduate papers addressing themes within the work of the 2017 Nasher Prize Laureate Pierre Huyghe, for the inaugural Nasher Prize Graduate Symposium. One of the chief aims of the Nasher Prize is to further scholarship on contemporary sculpture, both through a careful look at the work of each laureate, as well as through conversations held around the world about sculptural practice in general, in all the various ways it is currently manifest—from objects to installations to video and sound, and much more, and the Graduate Symposium is a major way we hope to do that. Hosting this inaugural symposium on the dynamic work of French artist Pierre Huyghe seems entirely appropriate, since there is much to explore and unpack within his exciting oeuvre, which encompasses a variety of materials and disciplines, bringing music, cinema, dance, and theater into contact with biology and philosophy, and incorporating time-based elements.

Huyghe has consistently sought new ways to bring together unconventional and heterogeneous materials into a practice exceeding the sum of its many parts, and the Nasher Prize Graduate Symposium offers students from any academic discipline a chance to present their scholarly work to a broad audience of art historians and museum professionals, and to receive feedback from fellow presenters, the keynote speaker, and audience members on a host of questions and topics related to Huyghe's dynamic work. In subsequent years, each new laureate will likewise be considered by students at the Nasher Prize Graduate Symposium.

We were so fortunate in this inaugural year to secure renowned art critic, curator, and Director of La Pancée art center, Montpellier,

France, Nicolas Bourriaud, as the 2017 Nasher Prize Graduate Symposium keynote speaker. Bourriaud is perhaps most well-known for coining the term Relational Aesthetics, which is used to describe artistic practice that is interactive, performative, or related to a social context rather than a private space, and the work of Huyghe, because it so often involves the participation of the viewer or living systems, often falls within this rubric. We are also grateful to Pavel Pyš, Curator of Visual Art at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, who adroitly moderated the conversations here at the Nasher during this inaugural event in March 2017.

Many thanks, as well, to the Nasher Prize sponsors who made the Nasher Prize Graduate Symposium possible, especially: JPMorgan Chase & Co., The Dallas Foundation, The Eugene McDermott Foundation, Nancy A. Nasher and David J. Haemisegger, The Donna Wilhelm Family Fund, Nancy Rogers, The **Heart** of Neiman Marcus Foundation, and the Cultural Services of the French Embassy.

Finally, our sincere thanks to each of the remarkable students who presented papers for this inaugural event. We look forward to your continued successes, as well as similar excellence from all of our future participants.

Jeremy Strick
Director, Nasher Sculpture Center

On Pierre Huyghe: Opening Remarks

Pavel S. Pyš

Curator of Visual Art, Walker Art Center
Nasher Prize Graduate Symposium Moderator

In looking back across Pierre Huyghe's practice, it might seem odd to bestow upon him a prestigious sculpture prize, let alone consider Huyghe a sculptor. His work made between the early and late 1990s employed the vocabulary of cinema – casting, acting, and editing – and manifested via moving image, writing, photographs, and posters to explore punctures in narrative, confluences of times and places, and the slippery boundary between reality and fiction. In these early works, Huyghe drew on the history of film, a medium he has called an open and “public space” that is up for grabs, reconsideration, and renegotiation. Huyghe achieved such marvelous slippages in works such as *Les Inciviles* (1995) and *L'Ellipse* (1998). In *Les Inciviles*, he considers Pierpaolo Pasolini's *Uccellacci e uccellini* [Hawks and Sparrows] (1966), retracing places where the work was originally shot, together with Ninetto Davoli, an actor who had appeared in the actual film. The resulting work is not a juxtaposition of old and new, but at once an ambiguous blend of Pasolini's film that we all share in our cultural memory, as well as a new work, what appears to be some form of documentary or filmic sketch or study. Without a strict script, *Les Inciviles* is not a remake, but a work that prods at and skirts around what a remake might be. Today's paper by Emilie Walsh will explore the relationship between fact and fiction in relation to Huyghe's video works, considering storytelling, and documenting space and time.

What then of materiality, objecthood, the stuff of sculpture, and Huyghe's relationship to the medium? Important shifts in terms of the artist's spatial process and approach occur with the following projects: *Mobil TV* (1995/98), *Le Procès du Temps Libre* at the Vienna Secession (1999), the expanded and multi-platform *No Ghost Just a Shell* collaboration (1999), and *Le Château de Turing*, at the Venice

1 Huyghe quoted in George Baker and Pierre Huyghe, “An Interview with Pierre Huyghe,” *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 96.

Biennale in 2001. In these instances, Huyghe, along with peers, among others Philippe Parreno, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, and Liam Gillick, pays acute attention to the process of not just making but presenting, as he calls it, the very “protocols of an exhibition,”² the rules that govern the act of presentation. It is hard to refer to these as “exhibitions,” as this term conventionally signifies a start and an endpoint, a fixed site, and likely a rather static situation – all of which Huyghe’s projects resist and decidedly do not conform to, instead celebrating malleability and porousness.

While important markers, these moments are not dramatic breaks in Huyghe’s practice. Their roots lie in his earliest projects – *Chantier Permanent* (1993) and *The Association of Freed Time* (1995). *Chantier Permanent* translates as “permanent construction site,” a project for which the artist travelled with a *Domus* magazine photographer to document unfinished buildings in the Mediterranean. In a state of becoming, Huyghe saw the buildings as offering the possibility that architectural space (and ultimately what traditionally frames sculpture) need not be fixed, but could be perpetually unfinished, unfolding and changing. Speaking of the project, Huyghe has said it “establishes an open present,”³ where incidents can occur. This forms an attitude and philosophy, by which the very notion of practical and functional space is placed under scrutiny. This extends to Huyghe’s approach to architecture as a site of change – in *Moving Gates* (2006) two doors sail and dance through the gallery; during *Streamside Day Follies* (presented at the Dia Art Foundation in New York in 2003) walls converge to create a temporary “pavilion” space for the viewing of a moving image work; while in *On/Off* (2001) and *Show as Exhibition* (2007) architectural space is activated via electric light.

2 Ibid, 81.

3 Huyghe in Liam Gillick, Philippe Parreno, and Pierre Huyghe, *The Trial* (Munich: Kunstverein Munich, 2000).

The Association of Freed Time is the officially registered association that Huyghe created with fellow artists Maurizio Cattelan, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Carsten Höller, Liam Gillick, Philippe Parreno, and Rirkrit Tiravanija, as a result of the *Moral Maze* exhibition organized at Le Consortium, Dijon in 1995. The association questioned the distinction between “work” and “leisure” time, idleness and productivity, transforming the duration of the exhibition into a departure point for other projects. For Huyghe, the collaboration forged a “vibrating temporality,”⁴ a temporality of like-minded artists who resist the strict, fixed parameters of exhibiting and making. Rebecca Starr’s paper today will address *The Association of Freed Time* in relation to leisure, inactivity, and resistance to work, while Noni Brynjolson will speak to themes of celebrations, conviviality, social order, and participation through the lens of *Streamside Day*.

And so back to sculpture. Huyghe has turned to the most elemental of materials: snow, ice, rain, mist, and fog to create objects and situations that change over time, or make themselves present, and then pass, and then return again. He has employed an odd, spine-tingling, and stomach-churning array of fauna: ants, bees, anemones, spiders, hermit crabs, blind cave fish, an active flu virus, tadpoles, each beyond the artist’s control – living, copulating, susceptible to disease and death. Huyghe has created micro-ecologies such as aquaria called Zoodrams, as well as *Untilled* at documenta 13 in 2012 – a compost area combining architectural elements, a reclining figure covered in a bee’s nest, marijuana, and psychotropic plants. Today, Pietro Scammacca’s paper *Baroque Bifurcations and Organisms* will touch upon many of these agents, in relation to the affinity between matter and life, and sculptural temporality. Huyghe has invoked the sculptural vocabulary of

4 Baker and Huyghe, “An Interview with Pierre Huyghe,” 88.

figurative statuary, teased at notions of monumentality, and plunged into time immemorial in works such as the video *De-extinction* (2014), in which he studies a copulating pair of insects preserved 30 million years ago in amber. Huyghe has enlisted these materials to examine the distinction between the natural and man-made, horological and natural time, and the divide between animal and human, while addressing themes of mortality and death, matter and decay. As Ursula Ströbele's paper *Concepts of Nature in Sculpture Today* will explore, traditional sculptural qualities of permanence, durability, fixity, stasis, weight, and solidity fall short of fully capturing Huyghe's engagement with objecthood. His sculptures are choreographed, scored, and staged, rather than placed, positioned, or moved. Having to borrow from the language of dance, theater, and music to describe Huyghe's sculptures illustrates just how limited and clunky sculpture's terminology can be. With *Chantier Permanent* and *The Association of Freed Time* in mind, we see that in Huyghe's hands, sculpture's borders are punctured, its rules are bent, sculpture is made temporary, unfolding, changing, and fragile.

Today we celebrate Pierre's practice and the many ways it has expanded the possibilities of not only sculpture, but of what art can be. I thank Pierre for his uncontainable, shifting, elusive, and hard-to-define practice, and the Nasher Sculpture Center for hosting the first in what I hope will be many scholarly dialogues surrounding Nasher Prize laureates.

**The Right to Be Lazy:
(Un)Productivity and
Leisure in Pierre Huyghe's
*L'Association des Temps
Libérés***

Rebecca Starr

University of Leeds

Throughout his career, Pierre Huyghe has worked across a multitude of mediums, creating the videos, installations, and scenarios for which he has gained critical acclaim. Much of Huyghe's art has been a product of his longstanding interest in temporality, an interest that continues to inform his practice today. The purpose of this paper is to examine one of Huyghe's artworks from the 1990s, a piece that sought to question the industrialized notions of temporality that govern time in contemporary life. In 1995, Huyghe founded *L'Association des Temps Libérés* (The Association of Freed Time), a society with the objectives of "developing unproductive time, reflecting on free time, and developing a society without work."¹ *L'Association des Temps Libérés* formed the basis for a number of Huyghe's artworks and through its activities encouraged both participants and viewers to reconsider their relationship to time and the different formats that it can take. In this paper I will offer an account of *Le procès du temps libre, Part I: Indices* (The Trial of Free Time, Part I: Clues), a sculptural installation that emerged from the activities of *L'Association des Temps Libérés* in 1999. I will argue that this installation attempted to develop the objectives of Huyghe's society through its re-evaluation of laziness and unproductivity and its focus on proposing the value of free time over leisure. I will begin by offering an overview of the founding of *L'Association des Temps Libérés* before reflecting on the individual components of the artwork and their relationships to the themes of laziness, unproductivity, and free time.

In 1995, Huyghe was among 12 artists invited to participate in *Le Labyrinthe moral* (The Moral Maze) at Le Consortium in Dijon. Devised by Huyghe's occasional collaborators and fellow artists Liam Gillick and Philippe Parreno, *Le Labyrinthe moral* was a curatorial project that invited a select group of participants to view

1 *Journal Officiel*, 127 (1995): unpaginated.

the exhibition as an “investigative model” and “collective space,” one “where it [was] possible to ask questions about the greatest number of domains parallel to their ideas.”² As part of the exhibition, external speakers were invited to the gallery to spend time with the artists on an individual basis, an experience that gave the artists involved an opportunity to conduct research to inform their practice through holding what Gillick has since described as “a series of fact-finding discussions during a number of closed seminars.”³ From the outset, the exhibition sought to challenge the supposed limits of temporality and duration, in part due to the curators’ interest in creating open-ended scenarios as a response to what they viewed as the problematic nature of exhibition dates, which often impose a definitive lifespan on the work featured. In his own efforts to understand “how one can free an exhibition from [its] temporal format,”⁴ Huyghe’s contribution to this exhibition was *L’Association des Temps Libérés*, a society in which the artists included in *Le Labyrinthe moral* became the founding members.⁵ Officially recognized as a nonprofit organization by the French government, the society proposed to meet its objectives of “developing unproductive time, reflecting on free time and developing a society without work,” through “staging public meetings, events and

2 Liam Gillick and Philippe Parreno, “Le Labyrinthe moral,” 1995, <http://www.leconsortium.fr/moral-maze/>, Le Consortium [accessed March 12, 2017].

3 Gillick has since described the influence of *Le Labyrinthe moral* as the catalyst for “a very precise and profound shift” in his own work. See: Liam Gillick, “Distraction,” in *Exploding Aesthetics*, ed. Annette W. Balkema and Henk Slager (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B. V., 2001), 139-144.

4 Huyghe quoted in George Baker and Pierre Huyghe, “An Interview with Pierre Huyghe,” *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 82.

5 The full list of participants of *Le Labyrinthe moral* and founding members of *L’Association des Temps Libérés*: Angela Bulloch, Maurizio Cattelan, Liam Gillick, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Douglas Gordon, Lothar Hempel, Carsten Höller, Pierre Huyghe, Paul Ramirez-Jonas, Jorge Pardo, Rirkrit Tiravanija, and Xavier Veilhan.

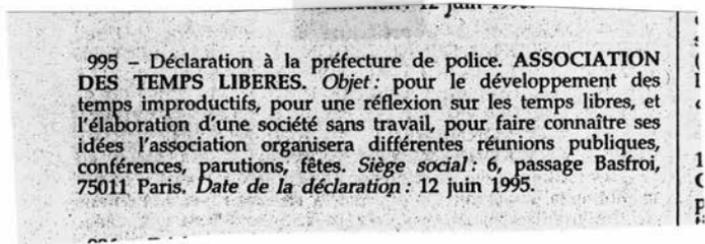


Figure 1.1.

Pierre Huyghe, *L'Association des Temps Libérés*, July 5, 1995, *Journal Officiel*, 1901, 8.3 x 7.7 in. (with Angela Bulloch, Maurizio Cattelan, Liam Gillick, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Douglas Gordon, Lothar Hempel, Carsten Höller, Jorge Pardo, Philippe Parreno, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Xavier Veihan). Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery.

celebrations”⁶ (fig. 1. 1). Here, it is important to note that even the founding of *L'Association des Temps Libérés* is an act of resisting temporal norms since it gives the activities of the society a false start date, a point that Gillick noted when giving a lecture on Huyghe’s work in New York in 2014.⁷ This is because *L'Association des Temps Libérés* is a product of research that Huyghe had been carrying out since 1990, a date he described in an interview as the “official beginning” of his practice.⁸ Similarly, although the society was officially founded on June 12, 1995, this did not become public knowledge until July 5, 1995, when the objectives of *L'Association des Temps Libérés* were published in *Journal Officiel*, almost two weeks after the society’s first meeting, which took place on June 22, 1995

6 *Journal Officiel*: unpaginated.

7 Liam Gillick, “The Association of Freed Time” (presentation at *Symposium*, The Artists Institute, New York, March 8, 2009).

8 Huyghe quoted in David Robbins, “Warm Science Fictions,” in *Le Château de Turing au Pavillon français, 49e Biennale de Venise du 06.06 au 01.11.2001* (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2003), 43.



Figure 1.2.
Pierre Huyghe, installation
view of *Le procès du temps libre*,
Part I: Indices at Secession
Gallery, Vienna, 1999. Courtesy
of the artist.

on the occasion of the opening of *Le Labyrinthe moral*, when all of the founding members were in attendance. Over the years following the founding of *L'Association des Temps Libérés*, Huyghe developed a number of projects as part of its activities, all of which offered the opportunity for participants and viewers to reimagine the nature of time. These projects included *The House or Home?*; a proposal devised by Huyghe and Parreno inviting members of the society to live together in an unfinished building, and *Le procès du temps libre, Part I: Indices*, an artwork that I will now explain in further detail.⁹

In 1999 Huyghe first exhibited *Le procès du temps libre, Part I: Indices* at Secession Gallery in Vienna (fig. 1.2). This sculptural

9 Liam Gillick, "The Association of Freed Time" (presentation at *Symposium*, The Artists Institute, New York, March 8 2014).

installation was made up of four individual components, including: a postcard with the term “boycott” printed across the front; a copy of Paul Lafargue’s essay titled “Le Droit à la Paresse” (The Right to Laziness); an A4 photocopy of Marcel Broodthaers’s *Fig. 1 Programme* (1973); and a poster-sized photograph featuring the image of a young woman. To begin with, these elements may seem disconnected, but each component represents a narrative, or particular approach that seeks to question the industrialized notions of time that we experience and that inform ideas surrounding the notions of laziness, unproductivity, and free time. For example, when Huyghe’s installation was exhibited, a further postcard was made available to viewers explaining the etymology of the term “boycott.” The accompanying postcard recounted the story of how workers had resisted the rise in rent prices that were proposed by the land agent Charles Cunningham Boycott on behalf of landowners in County Mayo, Ireland during the 19th century. This event became the earliest-known effort to force a change of policy through workers refusing to communicate with their employers, so the campaign against the land agent led to the coining of the term “boycott” as it is used today. Therefore, it could be suggested that the inclusion of this postcard within Huyghe’s installation is a deliberate effort to demonstrate the potential of collective activity in opposing unrealistic and exploitative working models. Huyghe also included a copy of Paul Lafargue’s pamphlet “Le Droit à la Paresse” in *Le procès du temps libre, Part I: Indices*. Lafargue was a French Marxist who played a key role in the founding and organization of the French Workers’ Party, a socialist political party that would later merge with the French Socialist Party and the French Section of the Workers’ International. Lafargue’s essay was influenced by the work of his father-in-law Karl Marx, and was first printed in the French newspaper *L’Égalité* in 1880. In his essay, Lafargue not only critiqued the structure of the working day but also the role that the bourgeoisie had played in

subordinating workers. Lafargue argued that the capitalist classes had duped the proletariat into believing that they had a right to work and, in the process, encouraged workers to be thankful for the employment that exploited their labor, an experience that Lafargue described as producing the “strange delusion of loving work.”¹⁰ The title of Lafargue’s essay derives from his belief that the capitalist classes had withdrawn from performing any productive labor and instead forced the proletariat to produce goods and services for their every whim, goods and services acquired with the profits from the very labor that created them in the first place. As a result of this, Lafargue argued that the bourgeoisie had become “condemned to laziness and forced enjoyment, to unproductiveness and overconsumption.”¹¹ Taking this idea one step further then, for Lafargue, it was the laziness and ignorance of the capitalist classes that was used to abuse and discount the rights of the workers, and it was precisely this assault on the rights of man that caused Lafargue to call for the proletariat to refute the “right to work” that was imposed on them against their will, and instead, reclaim their own “right to be lazy.” The inclusion of Marcel Broodthaers’s work can be considered a reference to the artist’s process of devising artworks. In her analysis of Broodthaers, art historian Deborah Schultz has argued that many of Broodthaers’s contemporaries described the artist as “prone to laziness,” since the labor that was required to make his conceptual pieces, which were often based on wordplay, was “pared down.”¹² Broodthaers’s reputation for “laziness” is, perhaps, also a product of the artist (who began his career as a poet) reading Charles Baudelaire’s journals, in which Baudelaire describes the “laziness” to which he felt he had

10 Paul Lafargue, *The Right to Be Lazy and Other Studies*, trans. Charles H. Kerr (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1907), 9.

11 Lafargue, *The Right to Be Lazy and Other Studies*, 34.

12 Deborah Schultz, *Marcel Broodthaers: Strategy and Dialogue* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), 188.

succumbed while living in Belgium, Broodthaers's birthplace.¹³ The final element of Huyghe's installation is a photograph depicting a young, naked woman lying in the grass. In the catalogue accompanying this exhibition, this photograph was described as a found image that was taken around 1970. This particular image is thought to have been chosen for presenting a somewhat stereotypical view of laziness, one that may be criticized for showing inactivity, given that the figure does not seem to be using her time productively, at least in accordance with industrialized ideas of temporality and the working day in the sense of the figure not being pictured producing anything that can be sold for profit.

In her analysis of Huyghe's practice, art historian Lauren Rotenberg suggests that *Le procès du temps libre, Part I: Indices* puts "notions of 'work', 'rest' and 'leisure' "on trial."¹⁴ It can be said that all of the components of Huyghe's installation reflect upon, explain, or critique ideas surrounding productivity and time outside of work. To understand the distinctions that Huyghe makes between leisure time and the free time that his society advocates, it is important to understand how his project seeks to critique the idea that living under capitalism has industrialized our perception of time. In its founding statement, *L'Association des Temps Libérés* declared its objective of "developing a society without work," as a response to the extent to which contemporary life is conditioned by the working day.¹⁵ Today workers often have little say in choosing their shift patterns or working hours, meaning that their time spent both inside and outside of work is determined by demands of the

13 See: Rachel Haidu, *The Absence of Work: Marcel Broodthaers, 1964-1976* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010), 20-24.

14 Lauren Rotenberg, "The Prospects of 'Freed' Time: Pierre Huyghe and *L'Association des Temps Libérés*," *Public Art Dialogue*, 3 no. 2 (2013): 198.

15 See: Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1*, trans. Ben Fowkes (Harmondsworth: Penguin; London: New Left Review, 1976), 340-344.

market. This, of course, is not a new phenomenon, and discussions of work and industrialized perceptions of time can be traced to the introduction of clock-time during the 19th century, when thinkers including Karl Marx were contemplating what constitutes the working day. But by advocating the development of free time, Huyghe's society attempts to subvert this view of time by opposing the idea that time should be conditioned by working hours and should be time in that one can do as one pleases. So what is it about free time that distinguishes it from leisure? To begin with, there cannot be a discussion of leisure without considering work since work is the activity that determines the time available for leisure. As political theorist Nichole Marie Shippen has argued, today our understanding of leisure is "defined primarily in relation to production (work) and consumption (consumerism)."¹⁶ Shippen traces this idea back to its origins in Aristotelian thought when, for Aristotle, both labor and leisure, along with play and relaxation, were deemed to be necessary activities for the full development of the contemplative subject. According to Aristotle, leisure is considered as a "condition" or state of being, one in which "time has no role."¹⁷ But even in its classical formation, leisure was not time in which people were able to do as they pleased, as Aristotle wrote: "If some shame must always attach to any failure to use aright the goods of life, a special measure of shame must attach to a failure to them aright in times of leisure."¹⁸ In Aristotle's view, certain activities are considered to be more appropriate than others during time dedicated to leisure, and it is this narrative that continues to contribute to contemporary debates surrounding what can be

16 Nichole Marie Shippen, *Decolonizing Time: Work, Leisure and Freedom* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 22.

17 Sebastian De Grazia, *Of Time, Work and Leisure* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1962), 11.

18 Aristotle, "1334a" in *Politics*, quoted in John L. Hemingway, "Leisure and Civility: Reflections on a Greek Ideal," *Leisure Sciences* 10 (1988): 189.

considered as a productive or unproductive use of time. As Shippen notes, “the conditions of capitalism have reduced the classical understanding of leisure as a good in itself to an instrumental, disciplined, and commodified understanding of leisure.”¹⁹ This is because today the term leisure is not necessarily associated with *free* activities (both in a monetary and ontological understanding of the term). Today, leisure is an industry, something demonstrated by the thousands of leisure centers, clubs, and activity centers that operate on local and international scales. Activities that may once have been deemed by Aristotle as necessary for personal development now play a dual role in supporting an ever-expanding industry in which leisure is marketed as a commodity. In contemporary culture, it is work that determines leisure by dictating how much time somebody has to pursue leisure activities, and, increasingly, how much disposable income is available to pursue such interests. The Aristotelian notion of leisure as a necessity also helps us to understand the increasing blurring of boundaries between work and leisure that is being experienced in contemporary culture, an idea that is prevalent in debates surrounding what constitutes a healthy work/life balance. Since capitalism regulates time based on work, the way in which time is perceived has also been subjected to being measured against levels of output and productivity. For instance, if we take the example of a company offering employees subsidized yoga classes during their lunch breaks, we can begin to understand the way in which capitalists seek to have further control over the interests of workers by determining how and when they enjoy what perhaps once would have been free time, but today is considered as leisure. Outside of working hours, practicing yoga is a conscious decision that may be made on the basis of improving health so is productive to the participant on an individual basis by helping him/her become stronger both mentally and physically. But the

19 Shippen, *Decolonizing Time*, 21-22.

individual needs of the worker are of little interest to the capitalist. In this setting, as far as the capitalist is concerned, partaking of such a class can be considered unproductive even though practicing such an activity may be beneficial to the capitalist, in terms of improving the stamina of the worker; this is of secondary interest since this is not usually the main incentive behind pursuing such an activity. Outside of working hours, this activity is unproductive since it does not contribute toward the production of goods or services that can be sold for profit. In this instance, it is highly unlikely that the capitalist is interested in the abilities of its employees to perform the perfect downward dog. But seeing the benefits that this activity has on the individual may lead a company to offer yoga classes within the workplace with the objective of increasing productivity. By creating a working environment that offers employees what may be perceived as a temporary escape from their already busy schedules, employers are able to give the impression that they care about the personal needs and well-being of their workers. This, in turn, helps to forge a positive view of the workplace, playing a role in Lafargue's statement, to which I referred earlier, in developing what he described as "the strange delusion of the love of work."²⁰ In this example, companies attempt to increase the productivity of workers and extract further profit from the labor via strategies that they prefer to call "perks of the job." Using this example, we can understand the extent to which time spent between work and leisure is becoming increasingly confused in contemporary culture and how industrialized notions of time have transformed the definition of productivity as shorthand for capital gain.

These ideas are precisely those that Huyghe's society opposes. In opposition to leisure, free time is time that should be considered away from the realm of working patterns. Or, as curator Lynne

20 Lafargue, *The Right to Be Lazy and Other Studies*, 9.

Cooke has argued, free time is a mode of existence that is “much more unstructured [and] which does not exist as a product of the capitalist, industrialist structure of the working day.”²¹ *L'Association des Temps Libérés* seeks to develop time that is not privy to the laws that govern capitalist modes of production and consumption. In other words, the productivity of Huyghe’s free time is not measured against producing goods and services for the intention of profit, and therefore seeks to subvert the definition of productivity that, under capitalism, has been reduced to the output of the worker. But understanding the transition of leisure becoming a product of work under capitalism is vital to developing the idea of free time as a format to be experienced outside of capitalist analysis. For thinkers such as Marx, the introduction of the working day as decided by capitalists only amplified the need for the worker to fight for time. This is because under the exploitative nature of capitalism, time away from work is usually spent recuperating for the next shift, in which the proletariat is forced to repeat the cycle of the day before to satisfy the quota of surplus value required by the capitalist. Here it is important to note that Huyghe’s proposition to develop unproductive time is not synonymous with inactivity and laziness, and that the connotations of such terms are not viewed with contention. This is because, for Huyghe, unlike the Aristotelian conditions for leisure, it is of no importance or relevance as to what a subject may choose to do, or indeed, not do within their free time. In Huyghe’s proposal for free time, the productivity of a particular activity is not measured against daily quotas and, instead, is enjoyed on the basis of how it contributes to the individual. This idea has some allusions toward Marx’s writings in the *Grundrisse*, in which he argued that it is not leisure but “free

21 Lynne Cooke, “Streamside Day” (presentation at *Symposium*, The Artists Institute, New York, March 8, 2014).

time [which] transforms its possessor into a different subject,”²² thus subverting the Aristotelian reading of leisure. Building on the work of Marx, Frankfurt School theorist Herbert Marcuse also developed the idea of free time as distinct from leisure, arguing that the latter “thrives in advanced industrial society, but is unfree to the extent to which it is administered by business and politics.”²³

But even though the components of *Le procès du temps libre, Part I: Indices* contribute toward Huyghe’s proposal to facilitate a temporal format that is not subject to capital and its modes of production, in practice it is very difficult for a scenario to be exempt from general economic relations, and it is to this extent that we have to question whether or not *L’Association des Temps Libérés* could fully meet its objectives. As art historian Amelia Barikin has pointed out in her analysis of Huyghe’s work, it is important to remember that the very existence of *L’Association des Temps Libérés* is dependent upon conforming to pre-established laws and statutes that govern nonprofit organizations in France, and, of course, France is a capitalist society.²⁴ This adds a further level of complexity to the projects of Huyghe’s society since its aspirations for an economically autonomous zone can be considered only as a result of its compliance with capitalist models of working. In spite of this, I would like to end this paper by arguing that despite its limitations, Huyghe’s *L’Association des Temps Libérés* encourages us to reconsider our own relationship to time, leisure, and productivity. There is a lot to unpack within this artwork; Indeed, there is too much to unpack within the confines of this presentation alone. In *Le procès du temps libre, Part I: Indices*,

22 Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, 559 quoted in Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2002), 52, fn. 38.

23 Marcuse, and 52: Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 52, fn. 38.

24 See: Amelia Barikin, *Parallel Presents: The Art of Pierre Huyghe* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2012), 39-47.

Huyghe's deliberate references to historical accounts of refusals to work and inactivity remind us that it is feasible to imagine and configure an alternate format for thinking about temporality. Perhaps one of the most pertinent messages to be found within this artwork is the idea that time does not have to be organized in accordance with industrialized, capitalist production that renders profit of greater importance than personal development. Or, as the official objectives of *The Association of Freed Time* outline, "developing unproductive time, reflecting on free time and developing a society without work" can be achieved. On this note, I would conclude by suggesting that we take some advice from Huyghe's *Le procès du temps libre, Part I: Indices* by listening to Lafargue, who argued that rather than performing our supposed right to work, instead we should all start to embrace our own right to be lazy.

Exploring Scenarios: Pierre Huyghe's Video- Sculptures

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Introduction

In 2015, Pierre Huyghe's retrospective took place at the TarraWarra Museum, near Melbourne in Australia, an exhibition curated by Amelia Barikin and Victoria Lynn. This was the first major presentation of Huyghe's work in Australia, and some videos were presented together for the first time, revealing the sculptural nature of these moving images and the unique relationship these videos have to sculpture.

In this paper, we will look closely at three of these video works and their relation to sculpture and space: *A Journey that Wasn't* (2005) and its prelude *L'Expedition Scintillante* (2002); *A Way in Untilled*, for documenta 13 (2011-12); and *De-extinction* (2014).

All of these works double as installation and video or consist entirely of video. But they also have a unique relationship to sculpture: Each one of them develops a particular spatiotemporal frame and a strong materiality.

We will assess for each one of them the relation to the sculptural element within the video, and the spatial and temporal situation they are developing: from a video as part of a complex storytelling installation (*A Journey that Wasn't*), to a video apparently documenting space and time (*A Way in Untilled*), to video as sculpture (*De-extinction*).

This paper will posit these video-sculptures as scenarios due to their relation to temporality and their narrative dimension. The idea of Huyghe's works as "fiction extended into reality"¹ will be explored as it pertains to our understanding of these video-sculptures. The

1 Amelia Barikin, *Parallel Presents: The Art of Pierre Huyghe* (Cambridge, Mass.: 2012), 1.



Figure 2.1.

Pierre Huyghe, *L'Expédition Scintillante, Acte 3*, 2002, *Untitled (Black Ice Rink)*, Black ice rink. Courtesy of the artist. Photo credit: Kub, Marcus Tretter.

term “scenario” will be compared to Nicolas Bourriaud’s use of it in *Postproduction*²: How does it apply when Huyghe is recycling existing narratives? And how does it carry a different meaning when Huyghe is using scenarios as a creative process, to “enter a world”?³ Each work will be explored as an enigmatic scenario where the near and the far—spatial and temporal—collide.

A Journey that Wasn’t

The polar expedition that Huyghe joined in 2005 presents a prelude in the form of an exhibition, *L'Expédition Scintillante* (2002). The artist developed, within the walls of the museum, the idea of the journey that he would have liked to do. Across three floors in the

2 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World* (New York: Lukas & Strenberg, 2001).

3 Huyghe, in *Art 21*, October 2007.

museum, Huyghe displayed his imaginative journey in three acts. On the first floor, a boat carved in ice melts gradually and morphs into the shape of a distant island. Then the visitor encounters a stage, where pink and violet lights move with the sound of Eric Satie's piano pieces, coloring the fog that is fuming out of the installation. Finally, on the third level, a black ice rink covers the floor, and a libretto for a musical event in three acts based on this expedition is presented (fig. 2.1). The temporality of the expedition is turned upside down: An account of the journey is presented before it happens, and a musical inspired by the expedition had already been written before there was anything to be inspired by.

Here, the exhibition suppresses and replaces the expedition. By not going elsewhere, Huyghe allows us to travel through his fantasy. The artist does not make the experience of distance, but rather re-creates the distance and the faraway within the exhibition.

This first journey nonetheless gave birth to the actual physical exploration of the far south, three years later: Huyghe embarked on a real-life adventure to the Antarctic, but the title of the video he had made of the journey reveals that it didn't actually happen: *A Journey that Wasn't*. The reality of the experience is put to doubt by the multiplication of layers of narrative: the relation to the earlier work (the prelude to the actual expedition), the relation to literature and fiction (as the journey is said to be inspired by *The Narrative of Gordon Pym* by Edgar Allan Poe)⁴, and the relation to the urban landscape of New York, where the last act of the journey takes place.

The journey gives birth to the video documenting the Antarctic journey, but also to a musical piece that was played by an orchestra

4 Edgar Allan Poe, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1838).



Figure 2.2.

Pierre Huyghe, *Double Negative, A Journey that Wasn't*, October 14, 2005. Event, Wollman Ice Rink, Central Park, New York, USA. Courtesy of the artist.

in New York, where some images for the video were shot as well. The music was composed from the data collected by mapping a newly discovered island in Antarctica. The musical soundtrack lasts as long as it takes to “listen” to the island. The soundscape is in itself a narrative and more specifically a musical equivalent of a travel journal or cartographic work.

The narrative of the video is elusive and mysterious, mixing images of Antarctica with those of the concert in New York (fig. 2.2). The near and the far collide in the space of the video, to create a new fictional space to travel through. Bringing together a set of strategies, Huyghe manages to create distance in the far and near. The real and fictional distances are melded together, to offer “a fiction extended into reality.”⁵

5 Barikin, *Parallel Presents*, 1.

During this journey, Huyghe also follows the quest to find an albino penguin. He developed equipment to facilitate his encounter with the mysterious animal, as well as recording gear to sonically map the island. A large inflatable structure was installed on the island, somehow resembling either a luminous whale or an iceberg. This sculptural element within the very dramatic landscape of Antarctica has a narrative function—to supposedly attract the penguin—but also allows us to view the landscape as sculptural. The distance the video creates flattens everything into a fictional, sculptural landscape.

In the video, the footage from Antarctica alternates with images from Central Park, New York, where Huyghe organized a public performance: a symphonic orchestra playing the island live, from the score that was recorded as mapping the island in Antarctica. The ice rink in Central Park was filled with a black iceberg that mimicked the one at the South Pole, and also echoes the ice rink in *L'Expédition Scintillante*. The figure of the penguin appears between the fake icebergs, in the fog and light, with the Manhattan skyline in the background.

The video brings together those two experiences, those two antagonistic worlds, and connects them through their spatial and sculptural nature.

A Journey that Wasn't is the closing chapter of a complex storytelling network. The video wraps up the narrative and brings a sense of cohesiveness due to the sculptural echoes between the scattered storylines and the distant space and timeframes of the performance.

A Way in Untilled

A Way in Untilled (fig. 2.3) was filmed on the site of Huyghe's project for documenta 13, titled *Untilled* (2012). In what appears to be an abandoned park, an enigmatic scene takes place and features a



Figure 2.3.

Pierre Huyghe, *A Way in Untilled* (still), 2012-13, video (color, sound), 13:59 minutes. Courtesy of the artist.

sculpture of a reclining nude on a plinth, wearing an active beehive on her head; a garden of strange weeds; and two dogs—including a white hound with a leg that had been dyed neon pink. The relationships between the sculptural elements within the video are striking: The classical sculpture reclining—head covered by bees—has a parallel in the sculptural white dog—a living body made artificial and unreal by his pink limb. The relation of the sculptural to the living is explored through this video, which is not a document of what the visitor saw during the exhibition, but rather a different narrative, shot at various times of day and in different weather conditions, when the installation was closed to the public. This abandoned park was formerly a compost heap, where Huyghe planted a combination of psychotropic, medicinal, and aphrodisiac plants. To add to the different layers of narrative, the spot chosen by Huyghe had been used by documenta artists in the past, including Joseph Beuys, whose project *7000 Oaks* was first presented at documenta 7 in 1982. Huyghe uprooted one of the oak trees for his installation in 2012.



Figure 2.4.

Pierre Huyghe, *De-extinction* (still), 2014, Film, color, stereo, sound, 2:35. Running time: 12 minutes 35 seconds. Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery.

The actual sculptures featured in the video—the reclining nude and Beuys’s oak tree are very different in nature and status: neoclassical/contemporary; human/vegetal; representation/presentation; idealized/naturalistic. But in the video they represent something we would describe as sculpture: They have a physical presence and perform a narrative function in Huyghe’s work. The contamination of the artwork by natural elements, such as the beehive seemingly devouring the head of the sculpture, contribute to the blurring of lines between the man-made and the natural kingdom.

But what is the relation of the video to the sculpture within the video? We have already stated that the video is not a documentation of the visitor’s experience through the installation, and it develops its own narrative and visual experience for the viewer. The technical specificities of video also allow a closer examination of the different featured elements: close-ups, longshots, a stretched timeline, and editing processes all build a different experience of the space.

De-extinction

Of the three works discussed in this paper, *De-extinction* (fig. 2.4) is the only one that consists entirely of video. The camera takes us

on a journey through an interior landscape of petrified tree resin to explore. The video wanders through this moment of suspended time, and the fossil is reanimated by the work of Huyghe.

There is a strong connection to a scientific narrative as amber is linked to the contemporary scientific practice of de-extinction, which gives the work its title. This practice, in which the DNA of extinct specimens is used in cloning for biological resurrection, has been popularized by science fiction novels and the movie *Jurassic Park*.⁶ This is emphasized in Huyghe's video as the two insects are caught mid-copulation, visible in death at a moment of life.

Their stillness is captured and magnified first by the amber, and secondly by Huyghe's video. To convey the idea or feeling of motion through stillness has long been an aim of western classical sculpture, and is achieved almost miraculously through the natural process of petrification and through its narrative rendered in Huyghe's video.

The camera movement seems to walk the viewer through the density of petrified resin, defying its materiality: It appears as though we can swim through the dense, transparent golden amber. The resin was once a liquid: The fine bubbles, as well as the presence of the various insects or vegetal pieces, are here to remind us of this.

Huyghe speaks about his work in terms of "navigation," stating, "De-extinction is a navigation through stone, in search for the earliest known specimen caught mid-copulation 30 million years ago."⁷ The video gives an intimate, sensual experience of the physicality

6 *Jurassic Park*, dir. Steven Spielberg, 1993, 2 hours 7 minutes.

7 As quoted in a press release for Pierre Huyghe, *In.Border.Deep*, at Hauser &

of the resin, presented as a flat sculpture, then opening into a three-dimensional world. In the same way, the wander through amber does not provide the viewer with much sense of scale, nor does it give an idea of the limits of the world we're exploring. The space seems to be limited, expended, mimicking the time dilatation that the petrified insects convey. This sense of spatial or temporal loss and dizziness is a strong experience provided by the video, and in this very example proves to stand as a sculpture itself.

Discussion: The Walk Through the Work

Analyzing these three different works, it appears there is a range of different situations in relation to sculpture: a complex storytelling; video as capturing the sculptural nature of the whole performance; video apparently documenting space and time while providing a reflection of the sculptural living; and video as sculpture, offering a material, spatial, and temporal journey in itself. There is a relationship to sculpture circulated in these three works, whether it is through the relation to space and landscape, through an exploration of the sculptural body and the living, or through the materiality, the mineralogy of sculpture.

These videos are sculptures in the sense that they offer a space and time to enter, a physical world to explore. Huyghe himself talks about his creative process as “entering a world,” and we can state that this experience is not so dissimilar to our experience of entering the world of video:

In discussing his work, Huyghe refers to scripts and scenarios, organisms and ecologies. He has spoken of the need for ‘no-knowledge zones’ where things have no names. Much of this experimentation is bound up with the protocols of world

Wirth, London, 2014.

makings: as Huyghe admits, ‘as I start a project, I always need to create a world. Then I enter this world and my walk through this world is the work.’⁸

If these video-sculptures are a time and space to explore, we can also understand them as narrative, and even as scenarios, that Huyghe shares with us.

In *Postproduction*, Bourriaud discusses the artists’ use of existing narratives as their primary material. In *A Journey that Wasn’t*, Huyghe uses Gordon Pym’s adventure, but also more broadly the imagination associated with the exploration of the North Pole and pioneer culture. In *A Way in Untilled*, the artist playfully refers to the history of sculpture, and in *De-extinction* it is tempting to connect the work to that of *Jurassic Park*, or more broadly to the narratives of contemporary scientific research. These references allow us to navigate the work, to enter and interpret it as an alternative scenario. As Bourriaud describes, the scenario artists:

Re-edit historical or ideological narratives, inserting the elements that compose them into alternative scenarios. Human society is structured by narratives, immaterial scenarios, which are more or less claimed as such and are translated by lifestyles, relationships to work or leisure, institutions, and ideologies. (...) We live within these narratives.⁹

We posit here that it is the narrative dimension of these works that creates a door to enter the videos. The enigmatic nature of the storylines brings together the near and the far, both spatial and

8 Amelia Barikin and Victoria Lynn, *Pierre Huyghe: TarraWarra International* (Tarrawarra: Tarrawarra Museum of Art, 2015): 15.

9 Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, 36.

temporal, and creates a sculptural reality to walk through. In an earlier work, *RSI, un bout de réel* (2006), Huyghe employs an unfinished drawing by Jacques Lacan, a sketch of a Borromean Knot that materializes, for the psychoanalyst, the relation between the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary. The artist transformed the simple line drawing into neon sculpture and hung it from the ceiling. But beyond this sculpture, the relationships among those three areas of reality are questioned in the majority of Huyghe's works. In *A Journey that Wasn't*, *De-extinction*, and *A Way in Untilled*, all three videos lie at the intersection between the real, the symbolic, and the imaginary. Different strategies of exploring space and time are put together in a singular approach of video-sculptures. Like the Borromean Knot neon sculpture, it is through their physical presences that they shine their way through conciliating their different realities.

Concepts of Nature in Sculpture Today

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Figure 3.1.

Pierre Huyghe, *Mating* (detail), 2015, Brass programmed LED masks, amber dice with mating insects; Dice: $\frac{3}{4} \times \frac{3}{4} \times \frac{3}{4}$ in. Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery.

Introduction

Two delicate, gracefully winged insects shimmer through the transparent golden amber. They have been held together for centuries, frozen in the moment of copulation, before new life could be born – removed from the flow of time. On the occasion of his exhibition *Orphan Pattern* in 2016 at Sprengel Museum Hannover, Pierre Huyghe carved this aforementioned found object into dice (fig. 3.1). Two performers wearing LED-illuminated masks roll the dice silently over the floor (*Mating*, 2015) (fig. 3.2). The players' masks light up in a rhythm that is not immediately discernable to the viewers, like following a conversation without being able to understand its significance. The sequence of illumination is, in fact, based on the mating behavior of fireflies.

Furthermore, the French artist, who is well known for the encounters and situations he creates between humans, animals, and objects, filmed the interior of the amber dice with a



Figure 3.2.

Pierre Huyghe, *Mating*, 2015, Brass programmed LED masks, amber dice with mating insects; Masks: $10\frac{1}{4} \times 6\frac{3}{16} \times 5\frac{7}{8}$ in. (each) Dice: $\frac{3}{4} \times \frac{3}{4} \times \frac{3}{4}$ in. Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery.

microscopic camera (*De-extinction*, 2015). Creating the impression of moving through outer space—a golden space with massive floating flies, slow, wavering, spherical sound, zoomed close-ups of seemingly lunar landscapes take the viewer on a journey into an alien world.

Thousands of flies, descendants of the conserved pair of insects, were placed in the new museum's building. Like black spots, they were sitting on the white painted walls, buzzing around the visitors' heads, until they died and remained littering the floor.

Based on this sculptural situation by Huyghe that reflects broadly on the ancient Pygmalion topos of bringing a marble statue to life, my paper focuses on phenomena on the periphery of sculpture at the intersection of natural science and bio-art. I consider them as so-called non-human Living Sculptures, that align themselves with

new natural scientific findings and methods, expanded concepts of material and authorship. As an art historian with a special interest in sculpture, I include relevant art historical viewpoints from the 1960s/1970s with their expansion of sculptural concepts, such as Hans Haacke (as an important precursor), followed by Huyghe, as a pivotal approach including performative and situative elements, and last, Revital Cohen & Tuur Van Balen, a young artistic duo, dealing with genetic manipulation.¹

The term “sculpture” is not restricted to the definition of a given object. Rather, “the sculptural” is understood as a methodological process that describes a specific approach to a given object. Gilbert & George once said of their large-scale paintings: “... we didn’t say they were paintings. We simply said they were a sculpture, and that brought a lot of funny questions.”² I, on the other hand, do not wish to confuse viewers, but am interested in the underlying thought experiment of viewing the work from different perspectives with medium-specific parameters such as plasticity, spatiality, narrative, and temporality.

Furthermore, I am interested in media-specific terms that might be used to describe these phenomena of sculptural boundaries. How do these “biofacts” (a term coined by philosopher and biologist

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- 1 See also “Skulpturale Rhetoriken der Natur. Das Erbe Hans Haackes und die Skulptur als *Real Time System* heute.”, in *Kritische Berichte* 2, 2017, *(Post)Nature/Natur (T)Räume*, ed. Anna Minta, Louise Malcolm (= in preparation); Nach der Natur. Prozesse des Lebens in der Skulptur”, contribution to the conference *Skulptur lehren. Künstlerische, kunstwissenschaftliche und kunstpädagogische Perspektiven auf Skulptur im erweiterten Feld*, organized by Sara Hornäk, Paderborn 2016.
 - 2 Gilbert & George, “Interview with Anne Seymore (1971),” as quoted in Birgit Jooss, “Das nicht enden wollende Bild. Der Aspekt der Dauer innerhalb von Performance” in *Momente im Prozess. Zeitlichkeit künstlerischer Produktion*, ed. Karin Gludovatz and Martin Peschken (Berlin: Reimer, 2004), 113-114, 118.

Nicole C. Karafyllis), “sculptures as real time systems” (Jack Burnham), or “objects as ecosystems” (Pierre Huyghe) deal with different forms of life and growth processes?

Around 1965, Hans Haacke started working with biological systems beside his interest in physical processes, and began his so-called Franciscan Series, including living animals as co-authors (approx. 1965-1972).

This series questions especially the boundaries of an artwork to its environment and also the boundaries between culture and nature, thus continuing to be relevant for artistic approaches today. Although Haacke’s art has been widely discussed by renowned scholars, their focus lies mostly on crediting his institutional critique and his awareness of the sociopolitical interdependencies of the art (market) system.³ His Franciscan Series has also been analyzed, but mainly in relation to the influence of cybernetics and systems theory. I am interested in the concept of nature, if and how these artworks deal with eco-political questions, and if they might be considered as important precursors to contemporary discourses about *post(nature)*, eco-aesthetics, and environmental politics.⁴ Has the perspective changed? Where do we find influences today?

Instead of classical mimesis, life is not imitated (anymore), but nature itself is brought into the white cube, underlining its process-related character. Living beings, such as plants,

3 For the history of reception, see among others, Benjamin Buchloh, “Hans Haacke: Memory and Instrumental Reason (1988), in *Hans Haacke*, October Files 18, ed. Rachel Churner (Cambridge, Mass./London: MIT Press, 2015), 107-136.

4 See T.J. Demos, *Decolonizing Nature. Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016); Timothy Morton, *Ökologie ohne Natur. Eine neue Sicht der Umwelt* (Berlin: Matthes & Seitz, 2016).

animals, and microorganisms, act as co-authors together with the life-giving and manipulating artist. Nature functions less as a counterpart, and instead becomes an essential part. What different concepts might arise, if the Aristotelian understanding of nature (*physis*), as something separated from external influences and technology (*techne*), as something simulated by humans, is not productive anymore?

The Franciscan Series by Hans Haacke

In 1968 Haacke realized *Live Airborne System* on Coney Island—the beginning of his Franciscan Series.⁵ Two different approaches are relevant here. First: The visualization and (pictorial) framing of a natural phenomenon within its original surrounding far removed from the white cube through creating a specific situation, therefore a *staging* of nature. Second: The “de-placement of nature and its spolia-like new montage”⁶ in the exhibition space, as Monika Wagner describes Haacke’s *Grass Grows* (1969), a greening mound of soil in the white cube. Both works deal with performativity and immanent temporality.⁷ The first-mentioned approach concerns Haacke’s *Live Airborne System*. Here, he highlights the classical sculptural characteristic of the corporal body in the “combined mass”⁸ of the seagulls.

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- 5 See Walther Grasskamp, “Real Time: The Work of Hans Haacke,” in: *Hans Haacke*, ed. id., Jon Bird, Molly Nesbit (London: Phaidon, 2004), 28-81, 42: “Haacke playfully calls them his ‘Franciscan’ works (in reference to Saint Francis, patron saint of animals) [...]”
 - 6 Monika Wagner, “Gras, Steine, Erde. Naturspolien in der zeitgenössischen Kunst”, *Museumskunde* 61, no. 1 (1996), 26-36, 36.
 - 7 For an expanded concept of performance, see Erika Fischer-Lichte, “Kunst der Aufführung – Aufführung der Kunst. Der Aufführungsbegriff als Modell für eine Ästhetik des Performativen”, in: *Kunst der Aufführung – Aufführung der Kunst*, ed. id., Clemens Risi, Jens Roselt (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2004), 11-26.
 - 8 “And also, I would like to lure 1000 seagulls to a certain spot (in the air) by some delicious food so as to construct an air sculpture from their combined



Figure 3.3.

Hans Haacke, *Chicken Hatching*, 1969, chicken eggs, incubator. Installation view: group exhibition. *New Alchemy: Elements, Systems, Forces*. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, 1969. © Hans Haacke / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

One year later he showed *Chicken Hatching* (fig. 3.3) at the Art Gallery of Ontario, which belongs to the second type.⁹ Fresh chicken eggs were brought into an incubator, selected by the date that they were laid. Within three weeks, they all had hatched. The picture shows the square boxes with transparent covers, enabling the viewer to walk around the sculptural installation and to observe the artificially directed spectacle of growing life. In the background of the image, you can see a stable, filled with straw, where the chickens

mass.” Hans Haacke in a letter to Jack Burnham, February 1966, quoted in Jack Burnham, “Real Time Systems (1969),” in *Jack Burnham: Dissolve into Comprehension: Writings and Interviews, 1964-2004*, ed. Melissa Ragain (Cambridge, Mass./London: MIT Press: 2015), 126-138, 131.

9 See *New Alchemy: Elements – Systems – Forces* [exh.-cat. Art Gallery of Ontario], ed. Dennis Young (Toronto, 1969). I am grateful to, and thank, Hans Haacke, who provided me with further information and images.

were taken afterward. *Chicken Hatching* demonstrates the artist's interest in the growing process and the role of the animals within a system, rather than the chickens as individuals. He isolates his animal partners, evokes a kind of scientific, laboratory-like distance, and maintains spatial and visual control, concentrated in the circuit of the power supply, whose warmth is essential to new life. The incubator artificially takes over the task of the sitting hen.¹⁰

Jack Burnham, a friend of Haacke, considered the post-formalist sculpture of the 1960s and 1970s as “real-time systems” due to its experimental openness, kinetic characteristics, and “more lifelike activity” consisting of interactive elements, “conceptions that can loosely be termed *unobjects*, these being either environments or artifacts that resist prevailing critical analysis.”¹¹ Burnham was especially interested in system theory, cybernetics, and artificial intelligence. In *Systems Esthetics* (1968), he quotes Haacke, who also preferred the description of sculpture as “real-time system” for his

10 See also Carolin A. Jones, “Haacke, Systems and ‘Nature’ around 1970: An Art of Systems/Systemic Art,” in *Art, Technology and Nature. Renaissance to Postmodernity*, ed. Camilla Skovbjerg Paldam, Jacob Wamberg (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 211-223. Jones describes his interest in system theoretical approaches, his stay at MIT, and his relationship with Burnham, whom he met during a Fulbright fellowship in 1961, and underlines his “antihumanist, technoutopian staging of Nature” (id., 13), which includes his focus on the alterity of human systems. According to her, since his exhibition at MIT in 1967, Haacke has been using the term “system” for his own work.

See also Churner, Hans Haacke, John Tyson, “Hans Haacke’s Animal Aesthetics and Ethics: Becoming Art, Becoming-Animal,” in *The Nexus of Animals and Humans: Space, Experience, Representation*. Panel at Southeastern College Art Conference, Sarasota, Florida (October 10, 2014), https://www.academia.edu/8358336/_Hans_Haackes_Animal_Aesthetics_and_Ethics_Becoming_Art_Becoming-Animal_in_The_Nexus_of_Animals_and_Humans_Space_Experience_Representation_panel_at_Southeastern_College_Art_Conference_Sarasota_FL_October_10_2014 [accessed December 24, 2016].

11 Jack Burnham, *Beyond Modern Sculpture. The Effects of Science and Technology on the Sculpture of This Age* (New York: Braziller, 1968), 10.

own works.¹² According to him, the work develops independently from a participating, empathic viewer. Despite this renunciation of the classical object, a sculptural system is never completely independent. *Chicken Hatching*, as do the other pieces of the series, too, needs some kind of control and observation, e.g., the feeding, adjustment of the temperature, or the transfer of the chickens into the stable.

Haacke's interest in system theory and cybernetics leads to the question: Are other perspectives on his works equally important today? Contemporary issues, such as limited resources, the sixth extinction, the transformation of nature into cultivated and industrialized landscapes, also change the relevant discourse of sculpture. Transferred to the discussion about genetic engineering, *Chicken Hatching* could also tell of automatized breeding methods and the creation of hybrid broilers, whose anatomy and lifetime have been adapted to the consumer's needs.

Goat Feeding in Woods and *Ten Turtles Set Free* are two other projects both realized in 1970 at the Fondation Maeght, France. In both, nature functions as counterpart and material that has to be studied. They belong to the first type of staging, framing, and performance of nature, while demonstrating their (non-human) co-authorship.

A goat feeding in the woods was confronted with an unusual environment and food: the isolated, domesticated, and tethered animal versus a seemingly "wild," uncultivated piece of nature. Central to this (open) experiment is the unusual impact on an

12 See Hans Haacke, Statement exh. cat. (New York: Howard Wise Gallery, 1968), quoted after Jack Burnham, "Systems Esthetics" *Artforum* 7, no. 1 (September 1968) reproduced in Jack Burnham: *Dissolve Into Comprehension*, 124.

organic digestion system, created by the goat eating foreign plants and being forced to adapt to the changed living conditions; a species, that—according to the theory of evolution by Charles Darwin—in the broader sense adapts, develops, or disappears.¹³

In contrast, the turtles of Haacke's *Ten Turtles Set Free* have been freed from their human imprisonment and brought back into the circle of nature—the artist acting as savior. With this “renaturation,” the turtles are challenged to readapt to their original environment. *Ten Turtles Set Free today* also tells us about the growing violation of the biodiversity, the necessity to protect it, and the difficulties of preserving exotic animals. The historical background and contemporary sociopolitical issues come together in this work.

Haacke's *Rhine Water Purification* (1972) underlines that the above-mentioned perspective and the focus on environmental issues has always played an important role in the Franciscan Series: It consists of a complex construction, filtering the industrially polluted water of the Ruhr area to make sure the local fish survive in it again.¹⁴ Nature, here, is not a romantic, untouched, distant ideal of nature, but rather a factor, closely intertwined with society, industry, and politics. Already here, in the work of Haacke, the contemporary discourse of *PostNature* and the Anthropocene is anticipated. T.J. Demos proclaims the *decolonization* and *definancialization* of nature. He describes the goal of a *political ecology* as “an eco-aesthetic rethinking of politics as much as a politicization of art's relation to

13 The ants of Haacke's *Ant Coop* (1969) were confronted with a similar situation. The adaptation and complex organization of an ant colony were demonstrated in a transparent Plexiglas box filled with sand and seeds.

14 The intervention caused by humans is obvious and the starting point of the concept. But in this case, technological achievements enable us to revoke the destruction and pollution.

the biosphere and of nature's inextricable links to the human world of economics, technology, culture and law."¹⁵

Sculpture as *real-time system* today?

Huyghe's *Untilled*

The criteria of real-time presence, process-based openness, and co-authorship have been widely discussed in recent times.¹⁶ They show the significance of Burnham's and Haacke's concept of sculpture as *real-time system*. According to Burnham, the sculptural problems changed toward an interdisciplinary approach and more scientific-artistic collaborations. Today, the idea of *non-human living sculptures* is more relevant than ever. It reveals the integration of living materials.

This becomes apparent in Pierre Huyghe's "Objects as ecosystems—actual, virtual, different,"¹⁷ as he himself describes his works, again bringing together the classical understanding of objects and their systemic context. *Untilled* (2012) (figs. 3.4–3.5) at documenta 13 has been internationally discussed. His accessible biotope at the border of the Karlsaue in Kassel also questions the traditional dichotomies of nature vs. culture and technology. Contrary to the "tamed," aestheticized nature of baroque garden ensembles (such as in Kassel), he focused on a non-site, on the location of the compost works, as the title names it: *Untilled*. At the same time, it reminds us of a work of art, which has no title, "Untitled".

15 T.J. Demos, "Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology: An Introduction," *The Third* 27, no. 1 (January 2013): 1–9, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09528822.2013.753187> [accessed January 25, 2017].

16 See especially: Caroline A. Jones, "Systems Symptoms" *Artforum* 51, no. 1 (September 2012): 113–116.

17 See: <http://www.nashersculpturecenter.org/pages/news-press/press-releases/news?id=103> [accessed January 25, 2017].



Figures 3.4–3.5.
Pierre Huyghe, *Untitled*, 2011–12, Living entities and inanimate things, made or not
made. Courtesy of the artist.

This site-specific and sculptural situation, created by Huyghe, could be assigned to the first type: a *staging* of nature. It consists of the growing of hallucinogenic plants, whose ingestion alters consciousness and breaks down ordinary notions of the self and the world for a while; two dogs, one of them the “famous” dog with its pink leg; a gardener; and the so-called “markers.” They are sculptural artifacts from previous exhibitions, such as the statue of a reclining figure partly covered by honeycombs—a replica of Max Weber’s original from the 1930s. Also included was a pink bench by Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster (*A Plan for Escape*, 2002), one of Joseph Beuys’s oak trees from (*soziale Plastik*), and a cut tree reminiscent of Robert Smithson’s *Dead Tree* (1969). No sign informed about the context of the work—they were simply present.

Organic and non-organic entities were included equally. Similar to Haacke, Huyghe is interested in the visualization of ecological systems and addressing the viewer as witness: “I’m interested in the vitality of the image, in the way an idea, an artifact, leaks into a biological or mineral reality. It is a set of topological operations. It is not displayed for a public, but for a raw witness exposed to these operations.”¹⁸

Fictive and factual elements, real-presence and staged elements suggest a narrative, that unfolds while walking through the idyllic, enigmatic scene. The dog named *Human* refers to the close relationship between humans and nature, as it is a specific breed, a Podenco. The philosopher and biologist Nicole C. Karafyllis describes this impact of technology on a natural growing process

18 Pierre Huyghe and Sky Goodden, “Interview with Sky Goodden,” *Blouin Art Info*, August 3, 2012, <http://www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/822127/pierre-huyghe-explains-his-buzzy-documenta-13-installation-and-why-his-work-is-not-performance-art> [accessed January 25, 2017].



Figure 3.6.

Revital Cohen & Tuur Van Balen, *Sensei Ichi-gō*, 2014, stainless steel, electronics, acrylic glass, vinyl, nylon, 200 x 170 x 450 cm, installation view, Schering Stiftung Berlin 2014. Courtesy of the artists. Photo: Revital Cohen and Tuur Van Balen.

as a “Biofakt,” a collocation of “Bio” and “Artifact.”¹⁹ According to her, it is a hermeneutic problem, which proves the close alliance of cultural practices with scientific, biological laboratory practices. The term questions the romantic concept of “untouched,” “intact” nature and also the idea of linear progression from natural to artificial. A “biofact” is made by a goal-oriented engineer. The artificial part is not necessarily visible from the outside, sometimes even not on a substantial, molecular level; a biofact does not have to be created genetically.

Besides the living entities, such as the hallucinogenic plants and the animals, urban traces, e.g., flagging, plates of asphalt, and residues of

19 See Nicole C. Karafyllis, “Biofakte. Grundlagen, Probleme und Perspektiven.”, in *Erwägen Wissen Ethik* (EWE) 17, no. 4 (2006): 547-558; id., “Das Wesen der Biofakte,” *Biofakt*, ed. id. (Paderborn, 2003), 11-26.

car wheels were also part of this fictive, somehow surreal landscape, where one was never sure what had been preexistent, what had been newly brought there, shaped or just found.

Robert Smithson is an interesting reference here, even if Huyghe does not deal directly with the classical dialectics of an original site, far away from civilization (e.g., the desert) and a non-site, determined by discourse.²⁰ Rather, *Untilled* is in between—maybe one could say a sculptural situation, which is less hermetic, but merges with its environment. A whole organic system in real time is on display, initiated by the artist and then left to its own devices, including its own temporal rhythm: The bees and the ants as collective intelligences distribute the seeds of the plants and there contribute to an inherent ecology; the head of the sculpture is growing constantly, the leftovers of the plants produce fertile soil.

Dorothea von Hantelmann emphasizes the specific ontology of *Untilled*, that brings together different forms of life as subjective materiality.²¹ Individual and collective organisms working as actants in a non-stable, non-hierarchical network in the sense of Bruno Latour's thoughts of a variable ontology. According to her, Huyghe develops an *in situ* concept, similar to Daniel Buren, a situated artwork, which is related to its context, integrates itself into an existing place and rearranges its composition. There are no clearly defined lines of sight (horizons) anymore; the space has to be explored; there is no arrival and no coherent image anymore.

20 See: Nancy Holt, ed., *The Writings of Robert Smithson: Essays with Illustrations* (New York: New York University Press, 1979).

21 Dorothea von Hantelmann, "Denken der Ankunft: Zur Ontologie von Pierre Huyghe's 'Untilled,'" in *Kunst und Wirklichkeit heute. Affirmation – Kritik – Transformation*, ed. Lotte Everts, Johannes Lang, Michael Lüthy, and Bernhard Schieder (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2015), 223-240.

Revital Cohen & Tuur Van Balen: *Sterile*

A form of biofact was realized by artists Revital Cohen & Tuur Van Balen with *Sterile*: Together with a Japanese biologist, they developed an edition of 45 albino goldfish without regenerative organs and presented them in an exhibition at the Schering Foundation in Berlin in 2014. In their growth state, the fish received an injection of morpholinos (synthetic nucleic acid-molecules), which halts the development of their gonads. The animals are thus born sterile. Using the methods of synthetic biology, life and growth are directed into a dead end. In the beginning, the artists showed three aquariums, each with one goldfish, placed on a plinth. This focus on the singularity of the fish and the reference to traditional display of sculpture underline the status of an art piece. Reduced to a minimum, the animals lived as sculptural objects, removed from their natural cycle. Next to the aquariums, one could see a machine, called *Sensei Ichi-gō* in stand-by-mode. This machine is able to overtake the task of the regenerative organs and repeats the laboratory work of the collaborating scientist in an automatized process to produce sterile fish out of egg cells and sperm—an outsourcing of the natural propagation. *Sterile* is sold as an edition—in contrast to Haacke’s Franciscan Series. It has previously been shaped through a biotechnological intervention by the artists and therefore questions the autonomy of natural growth—which Haacke and Huyghe performed without genetic manipulation.

Résumé

Artists, like Pinar Yoldas, alienate the biological and political history of nature. They develop it further, by creating fictive species, that are caused by climate change, and the development of our plastic-polluted oceans into a so-called plastisphere.²² *An Ecosystem of*

22 One of the biggest problems is the distribution of plastic in the oceans worldwide, called “Plastisphere” by oceanographers. It also includes

Excess (2014) presents this speculative biology and imagines hybrid animals and organs that might help these animals adapt to the *Great Pacific Garbage Patch*. Some of these “post-human life forms” are able to metabolize plastics, e.g., the balloon-eating turtle or the Pantone bird, which feeds on colored caps of plastic bottles.²³

There are many examples of so-called *non-human living sculpture*, dealing with different concepts of nature and materialism. Not all of them feature a critical understanding of ecology, not all of them are an expression of a “multinaturalism,”²⁴ as T.J. Demos proclaims in view of Michel Serre’s critique of a Kantian understanding of an anthropocentric domesticated nature. Our Western, romantic idea of nature does not reach far enough to rethink nature in a more radical openness, modifying traditional dichotomies and not just cultivating, isolating, protecting, and monumentalizing it. It is therefore worth, I think, to analyze what sculptural paths contemporary art practices follow, such as the innovative approach

new ecosystems, that live on the floating plastic in the oceans. See: <http://www.uni-bremen.de/universitaet/presseservice/pressemitteilungen/einzelanzeige/news/detail/News/plastisphaere-bremer-forschungsprojekt-unter-originalitaetsverdacht.html?cHash=fb542fad347e29bcc4c612082ffc7a59> [accessed March 16, 2017].

- 23 For *An Ecosystem of Excess*, the creatures are meant to emerge when there is no human life anymore. So it imagines a post-Anthropocene world. In a time, when we have to rethink nature, the artist considers herself as “Eco-Futurist” and classifies the swimming vortex of garbage as monumental, collective kinetic sculpture. See: <http://www.pinaryoldas.info/Ecosystem-of-Excess-2014> [accessed April 3, 2017].

Already in 1970, Haacke built his site-specific sculpture made of waste and flotsam at a beach in Spain called *Monument to Beach Pollution*, whose elements tell about their origin.

- 24 “Distinct from multiculturalism, which implies multiple perspectives on a self-same nature, multinaturalism asserts that human and nonhuman epistemologies – or ways of seeing – are continuous, but that the object of their gazes is itself different, insofar as nature is a site of diverse ontological becoming [...]” T.J. Demos, *Decolonizing Nature*, 226.

of Pierre Huyghe, who is the honored artist at Nasher Sculpture Center, while also looking back to the pioneers of the 1960s/1970s, such as Hans Haacke who, among others, opened the discourse about sculpture in the expanded field.²⁵

²⁵ See Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *October* 8 (Spring, 1979): 30-44.

Pierre Huyghe's Baroque Bifurcations and Organisms

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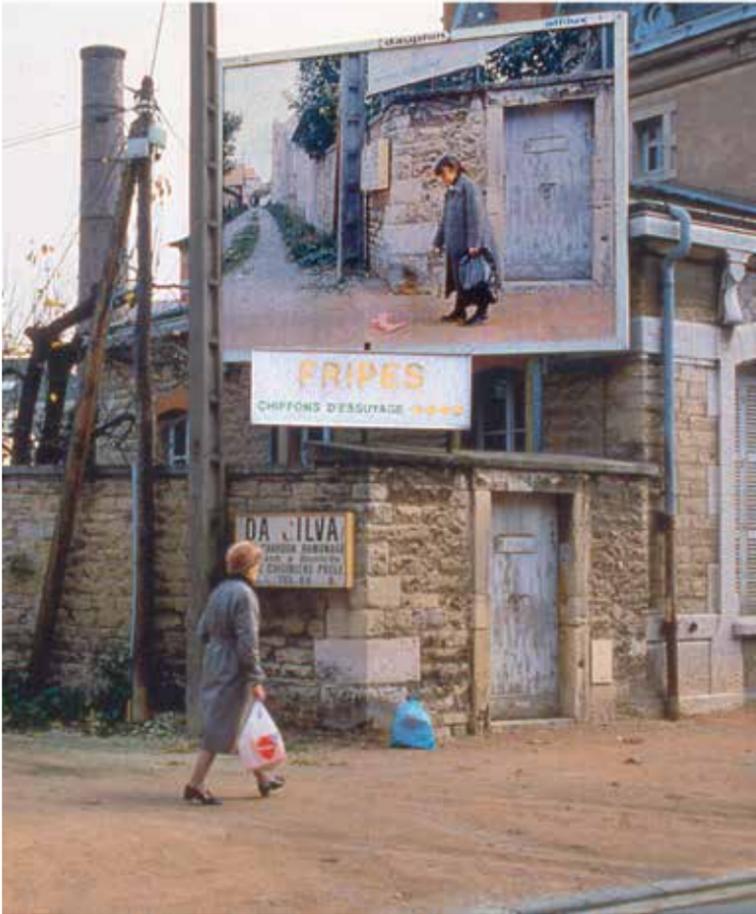


Figure 4.1.

Pierre Huyghe, *Rue Longvic*, 1994, event, poster on public billboard, Dijon. Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery.

According to Jorge Luis Borges, there are four devices that constitute fantastic literature: “the work within the work, the contamination of reality by dream, the voyage in time, and the double.”¹ Pierre Huyghe’s early works, such as his billboards (fig. 4.1), seem to be deliberately employing some of these devices of fiction. After having invited some actors to interpret an everyday activity linked with a public site, the scene was photographed and pasted onto a billboard adjacent to the location. Finally, a new picture of the site that incorporated the poster was taken. Through this *mise-en-abîme*, a work within a work, the idea of the billboards “was to juxtapose two kinds of time, to superimpose the time of the event and that of its representation.”² In fact, when looking at these photographs, one is reminded of Borges’s *Garden of Forking Paths*: a labyrinth of labyrinth, a world made of an expanding and bewildering network of divergent, intersected, and parallel times.³ It is fundamental to note that, among the numerous affiliations that can be found between Borges and Michel Foucault, their respective interest in the Baroque is a fundamental one. After admitting to owing his enquiry to the amusement triggered by Borges’s *Chinese Encyclopedia* in the preface of *The Order of Things*, Foucault opens the first chapter of the same book with a rigorous analysis of *Las Meninas* (1656)—a canonical Baroque painting by Diego Velázquez (fig. 4.2). This complex work also employs a *mise-en-abîme* that disrupts reality and representation, much like Huyghe’s billboards. The painting in fact generates two overlapping spaces: the volume it represents and the real volume occupied by the spectator, placing the painter at the threshold of

1 Jorge Luis Borges, quoted in James E. Irby, Introduction to *Labyrinths*, ed. Donald A. Yates (New York: New Directions, 2007), 18.

2 Pierre Huyghe, quoted in *Pierre Huyghe*, ed. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev (Turin: Castello di Rivoli, 2004), Exhibition catalogue, 164.

3 Amelia Barikin, “The Open Present” in *Parallel Presents: The Art of Pierre Huyghe*, (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2012), 28.



Figure 4.2.
Diego Velázquez, *Las Meninas*, 1656,
oil on canvas, 125 x 108 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (318 x
276 cm). Museo del Prado, Madrid.

incompatible visibilities. Surely *Las Meninas* contains a certain Borgesean quality, a labyrinthine mental stimulation where the plot has been folded upon itself. Like Huyghe's billboards, through a doubling mechanism, the painting bifurcates onto both reality and representation. Two kinds of time are also being juxtaposed in this painting: that of its progressive realization and that of its final representation. "We, the spectators, are an additional factor," says Foucault; similarly, in Huyghe's billboards "when you enter the show you become an extra yourself."⁴

Although Huyghe was not interested in playing with a purely retinal "mirror effect" (which is more characteristic of *Las Meninas*), these earlier works are successful in staging a Baroque *trompe l'oeil*: a misrecognition where representation and reality overlap, diverge, and converge. Considering this play with the virtual and the actual, it is important to note that through the abundance of *trompe l'oeil* as a decorative ornament, Baroque culture was also invested in establishing a fluid relationship

4 Huyghe quoted in Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, *Pierre Huyghe*, 164.

between reality and fiction, or with making reality dubious. Jean Rousset has described this phenomenon through the metaphor of the disguise: “The disguise reveals its secret in its own way, that is to say through disguise: it is by disguising ourselves that we become who we are... the mask is the truth. In the world of the trompe l’oeil, we need the detour of fiction [feinte] in order to attain reality.”⁵ The Baroque invites us to reach reality by means of fiction. Miguel de Cervantes’s character Don Quixote may serve as an interesting example. This Baroque novel narrates the story of an impoverished Hidalgo, who becomes obsessed with the chivalrous ideals solicited in the novels he has read and decides to live his life by defending the helpless and defeating the wicked. Don Quixote becomes a pilgrim who performs the world according to the prescriptive scripts of the fictive tales that he has read. Interestingly, Foucault also refers to this Baroque work in the third chapter of *The Order of Things*, titled “Representing”:

It is [Don Quixote’s] task to recreate the epic, though by a reverse process: the epic recounted (or claimed to recount) real exploits, offering them to our memory; Don Quixote, on the other hand, must endow with reality the signs-without-content of the narrative.⁶

Don Quixote must prove that the fictive stories he has read are true by deciphering the world; he finds fiction in the real, and applies the books to reality. He becomes alienated in analogy, as Foucault suggests, by finding similitudes and continuities between reality and fiction. It is precisely this act of applying a prescribed script

5 Jean Rousset, “De la métamorphose au Déguisement” in *La Littérature de l’Âge Baroque en France* (Paris: [s.n.], 1953), 54.

6 Michel Foucault, “Representing” in *The Order of Things* (New York: Vintage Books, 2013), 52.

to reality that is felt in Huyghe's *The Third Memory* (2000)—a film that reconstructs John Wojtowicz's robbery of a bank in 1972. The highly mediatized event (interestingly, some stories described the robbery as chivalrous act, given that the money was to be used for the sex change of Wojtowicz's partner) also inspired the storyline of the Hollywood film *Dog Day Afternoon* starring Al Pacino. In 1999, Huyghe invited Wojtowicz to re-create the event from memory and to direct his own view of the facts. But the mediatized stories of the event had penetrated the robber's memory and subjectivity; his actions were confused with those of the fictive character fabricated around the actual event. Huyghe's film shows a man who became alienated in analogy, "the disordered player of the Same and the Other" who, like Don Quixote, confuses reality with fiction.

Much like Velázquez's *Las Meninas*, the story of Don Quixote is also folded upon itself. In the second part of the novel, Don Quixote meets the characters who have read the first part of his story and recognize him as the hero of the book. Cervantes's text "turns back upon itself, thrusts itself back into its own destiny, and becomes the object of its own narrative."⁷ José Antonio Maravall proposed that this folding operation is an inherent Baroque mechanism: If in *Las Meninas* painting is painted, in Don Quixote, narration is narrated.⁸ There is indeed an element of self-consciousness or self-parody present in both *Las Meninas* and *Don Quixote*. For Borges, it is precisely this self-parodying mechanism that defines the Baroque:

I should define the Baroque as that style that deliberately exhausts (or tries to exhaust) all its possibilities and which

7 Ibid, 53.

8 José Antonio Maravall, "The Wordly Structure of Life" in *Culture of the Baroque: An Analysis of a Historical Structure*, trans. Terry Cochran (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 200.

borders on its own parody. It was in vain that Andrew Lang, back in the eighteen eighties, attempted a burlesque of Pope's *Odyssey*; that the work was already its own parody and the would-be parodist was unable to go beyond the original text. 'Baroque' is the name of one of the forms of syllogism.⁹

Given this definition, it seems that Borges's own short stories are marked by a certain "Baroque syllogism" and similar play with authorship. James E. Irby has already argued that "Borges's prose is in fact a modern adaptation of the Latinized Baroque *stil coupé*" and that a "self-parodying tone is particularly evident in 'Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote' ... In that sense, Borges also ironically translates himself."¹⁰ In this short story, the narrator discovers that the writer Pierre Menard had left behind an unfinished masterpiece that consists of the ninth and thirty-eighth chapters of Part I of *Don Quixote* and a fragment of Chapter XXII. With this venture, Menard "did not want to compose another Quixote—which is easy—but the Quixote itself. Needless to say, he never contemplated a mechanical transcription of the original; he did not propose to copy it. His admirable intention was to produce a few pages that would coincide—word for word and line for line—with those of Miguel de Cervantes."¹¹ When publishing a limited edition of Pierre Menard's "achievements" in both English and Spanish, Huyghe responds to the narrator when he laments that Ménard "did not let anyone examine these drafts and took care they should not survive him. In vain I have tried to reconstruct them... Unfortunately, only a second Pierre Menard, inverting the other's work, would be able to exhume and revive the lost Troys."¹²

9 Jorge Luis Borges, Preface to *A Universal History of Infamy*, trans. Norman Thomas Di Giovanni (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1972), 11.

10 James E. Irby, Introduction to *Labyrinths*, 21.

11 Borges, "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote" in *Labyrinths*, 65-66.

12 My emphasis, Borges, *A Universal History of Infamy*, 70.

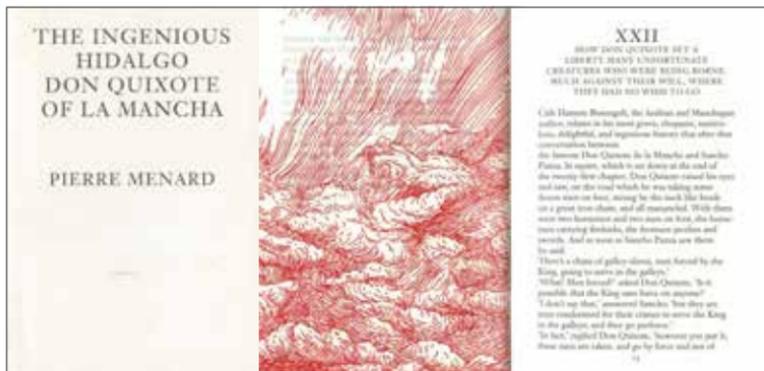


Figure 4.3.
 Pierre Ménard, *El ingenioso hidalgo de la Mancha*, 1996/2006, book, 34 pages, 6¾ x 4½ in. (17 x 11 cm). © MUSAC Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León (2007).

Given Huyghe’s interest in reproduction, dubbing, difference, and repetition in the 1990s, it became evident that he was the “second Pierre Menard” and could inject the fictitious character into reality by reconstructing his writings (fig. 4.3). Interestingly, like the novel *Don Quixote*, the book carries two publishing dates: 1996, when Huyghe first had the idea for this work, and 2006, the actual realization of the book. As the narrative of the impoverished Hidalgo circulates from one author to another, it becomes secondary, loses its authorial attachments and turns into a saturated palimpsest with bifurcating stories. Being the “story of a story,” this publication follows the Baroque logic of doubling and folding that has been explored.

Critics interested in Huyghe’s doublings of representation have described works such as *Remake* as producing a structural “logic of the fold” but with no explicit reference to the Baroque.¹³

13 See Jean Cristophe Royoux “Free Time Workers and the Reconfiguration of Public Space: Several Hypotheses on the Work of Pierre Huyghe” in *Saving the Image: Art After Film*, ed. Tanya Leighton and Pavel Büchler (Glasgow: Centre for

Most recently, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev hinted at a Baroque understanding of Huyghe's body of work by briefly referring to Gilles Deleuze's development of the philosophical ideas of the Baroque philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz in the book *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*.¹⁴ Interestingly, in this book Deleuze describes Borges as being a "disciple of Leibniz" because the garden of forking paths allegorizes a Baroque labyrinthine world that embraces all possibilities, a world "where all outcomes are produced, each being a point of departure for other bifurcations."¹⁵ Deleuze also provides a visual interpretation of Leibniz's philosophy through an architectural diagram of a Baroque house. In this "philosophical architecture," the ambivalent nature of the Baroque façade (which has the function to both separate the inside from the outside and at the same time, to represent the significance of the building to the exterior) causes Baroque architecture to bifurcate onto both the outside and the inside, to become a "diaphragm" between domestic singularity and external multiplicity – a statement that recalls Leibniz's theory of monadology. In addition, in the Baroque,

Sculpture goes beyond itself by being achieved in architecture; and in turn, architecture discovers a frame in the façade, but the frame itself becomes detached from the inside, and establishes relations with the surroundings so as to realize architecture in city planning.¹⁶

Gordon Matta-Clark's "anarchitecture" literally detaches architectural frames of abandoned houses, carves tunneled labyrinths

Contemporary Arts, 2003).

14 See Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, "Pierre Huyghe: Through a Looking Glass" in *Pierre Huyghe*.

15 Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (London: Continuum, 2001), 70-71.

16 *Ibid*, 141.



Figure 4.4.

Gordon Matta-Clark, *Office Baroque*, 1977, Two silver dye bleach prints, 20.2 x 39.75 and 19.7 x 39.75 inches. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Purchased with funds contributed by the International Director's Council and Executive Committee Members: Edythe Broad, Elaine Terner Cooper, Linda Fischbach, Ronnie Heyman, J. Tomilson Hill, Dakis Joannou, Cindy Johnson, Barbara Lane, Linda Macklowe, Brian McIver, Peter Norton, Willem Pepler, Alain-Dominique Perrin, Rachel Rudin, David Teiger, Ginny Williams, and Elliot K. Wolk, 1998. © 2017 Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

into their structures and generates a confusing coalescence between the outside and the inside of the buildings. As such, it stands as visual representation of the philosophical architecture conceptualized by Deleuze via Leibniz and Borges. The work *Office Baroque* (1977) most explicitly reveals the artist's interest in replicating these Baroque folds and bifurcations (fig. 4.4). The American artist's dissected

buildings are thus Baroque façades, in the Deleuzian sense of the term, where the divide between the outside and the inside has been short-circuited. Two decades after the original event, Huyghe projected Matta-Clark's film *Conical Intersect* (1975) on the new buildings erected after Matta-Clark's intervention, creating a sort of spatiotemporal loophole. Huyghe's *Light Conical Intersect* (1996) transformed Matta-Clark's "spatial cut" into a "temporal cut" that summoned the American artist's Baroque philosophical architecture. The site-specificity of Huyghe's film causes the original event to be folded upon itself, falling in line with the previously explored Baroque mechanisms of representation.

Furthermore, *The Fold* can also serve as a paradigm for interpreting Huyghe's interest in non-human entities and organisms, particularly the artist's use of insects. Leibniz's investigation into the systems of nature has led Tom Conley to describe the Baroque thinker as a philosopher of habitat and ecology. Folding his thoughts with Leibniz's, Deleuze sees a world where an "affinity of matter with life and organisms" is possible.¹⁷ There is a spirit in all matter, a driving force residing in all things—an inner vitalism that may refer to the vibrant activity of atoms in matter. Living beings contain "an inner formative fold that is transformed through evolution, with the organism's development."¹⁸ In short, all organisms, whether human or non-human, are understood as "endlessly being formed" and as constantly unfolding. Thus, things grow independently from us, waves fold over one another without us being there. In this coexistence of monads, nature becomes an immense melody and flow of bodies. In an endnote, Deleuze refers to the biologist Jakob von Uexküll for having conceived of a "highly Leibnizian review of Nature as a melody" by looking at insects such as bees

17 Ibid, 7.

18 Ibid, 8.

and ticks.¹⁹ The Baltic biologist-philosopher, an influence for both Deleuze and Huyghe, is most famous for having employed the term *Umwelt*—literally translated as “environment”—to describe the world as it is experienced by a particular organism. Through a language reminiscent of Leibniz, Uexküll envisions nature as a vast “symphony” where “each individual creature plays a distinct motif that harmonizes with the other living and non-living things it encounters.”²⁰ In Uexküll’s holistic biology, even the smallest life form, or “monad” to borrow from Leibniz, is a subject of a unique bubble world with an independent consciousness and distinct cognitive mapping abilities. In doing so, Uexküll sought to account for nonhuman subjects to decenter anthropocentric conventions of biology and to conceive of a nature that is not limited to human beings. Just as in *The Garden of Forking Paths*, for Uexküll there are different spatiotemporal planes, different *umwelten*, instead of a single world into which all living creatures are pigeonholed.

Pierre Huyghe pays an explicit homage to the “Leibnizian biologist” with his piece *Umwelt* (2011, fig. 4.5), where ants and spiders are released in a gallery space in which they navigate in accordance to their distinctive biological rhythms. The ants’ experience of the territory is idiosyncratic and inaccessible to human perception. As Huyghe explains: “The ants will have one, you will have one. You have one that grows with you in your life ... Your territory is different. The way you perceive it is *umwelt*.”²¹ Humans and insects are co-present in the space, but each organism evolves independently, each singular monad follows its inner “formative fold.” The problem lies in the conditions of encounter, to see

19 Ibid, n34, 191.

20 Undine Stellbach and Stephen Loo, “Insects and Other Minute Perceptions in the Baroque House” in *Deleuze and the Non/human*, ed. John Roffe and Hannah Stark (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 110.

21 Pierre Huyghe, interview with Matthew Westwood, *The Australian*, October 20, 2015.



Figure 4.5.
Pierre Huyghe, *Umwelt*, 2011, Ants and spiders on wall. Installation at Galerie Esther Schipper, Berlin, 2011. Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery.

how different organisms might relate or not since the insects in *Umwelt* are microscopic and are hardly perceived by the visitors. In the world of Leibniz, “there are countless inconspicuous perceptions, which do not stand out enough for one to be aware of or to remember them.”²² Uexkullian insects such as butterflies, ticks, worms, and flies also make shy appearances in Deleuze’s ruminations on the Baroque: the butterfly, for instance, “folded into the caterpillar that will soon unfold,” develops its own *umwelt* and independently finds its place among the other monads. Nature is constituted of these minute perceptions, microscopic folds that together shape the immensity of the environment.²³ We might think here of the rhythmical pulsations of natural background noises such as the murmur of the waves or the distant sound of twittering birds

22 Gottfried W. Leibniz, quoted in Deleuze, *The Fold*, 100.

23 See “Perception in the Folds,” Deleuze, *The Fold*, 97-113.

in trees. Indeed, the discreet movement of the ants in *Umwelt* or the negligible “buzzing” of the bees in the work *Untilled* (2012), each persisting beyond the exhibition time frame, recall the Leibnizian idea of monadic activity. As different behaviors are co-present in *Untilled*, the sculpture becomes a product of differential and minute relations with a contingent evolutionary path. The unfolding of these living systems that move independently from our control and gaze allow the artist to experiment with the format of time and subsequently with the medium of sculpture as it appears to us. Huyghe’s sculptures are events in the Leibnizian sense of the term: curved lines where a continuum of perceptible and non-perceptible relations occur over time.

Throughout a series of specific examples stemming from Baroque culture, I have sought to highlight a certain continuity of Baroque features in the diversity of Huyghe’s art, suggesting that the artist went from folding representation to the unfolding of events.²⁴ If in the 1990s his works engaged with logics of representation, doublings of reality, and various “folding” operations—mechanisms that are reminiscent of a Baroque system of thought; his most recent sculptures shifted the attention toward the development of organisms and non-human living systems—elements that also appear in Deleuze’s reading of the Baroque via Leibniz and Uexküll. On a more general scale, this analysis has permitted to stretch the Baroque outside of its historical limits and to remobilize it as a process that opens possibilities for reading contemporary art and philosophy.

24 Interestingly, in *The Fold*, Deleuze explains that the “unfold is clearly not the contrary of the fold, nor its effacement, but the *continuation* or the extension of its acts, the condition of its manifestation,” 40.

After the Party: The Convivial Moment as Departure Point in Relational Art

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Celebrations are ephemeral by nature, and involve moments of collective joy that mark important events. Part of the joy comes from their temporality: We anticipate the event before it occurs and hope for its return once it has finished. The celebration is a common trope within public artworks that might be described as participatory or relational. In this paper, I am interested in examining what happens “after the party,” or in other words, after the initial event associated with an art project or exhibition has taken place. I look at the possibilities and potentialities that emerge through the creative, joyful energy of the participatory event. In some cases, this type of energy can disrupt social hierarchies, as Mikhail Bakhtin noted in his discussion of the carnivalesque. I’m interested in pairing the notion of conviviality with that of duration. I ask: Does the ephemerality of relational art counteract duration? Or can moments of convivial joy be repeated or prolonged, perhaps leading to new traditions?

One of the premises for this paper is to examine Pierre Huyghe’s suggestion that artworks and exhibitions can be departure points, rather than ends in themselves.¹ In 2003, Huyghe planned a celebration for a new housing development in the Hudson River Valley in upstate New York, near the village of Fishkill, about 70 miles north of New York City. I will begin with a brief tour of the sites surrounding Streamside Knolls, a development built by AVR Realty in the early 2000s, which consists of 103 homes. Most are around 4,000 square feet and have four or five bedrooms. There is nothing particularly unique about these homes in terms of their architecture—while they are large and expensive, they are not as ostentatious as McMansions. The same design is used repeatedly throughout the development, with many noticeably similar features visible throughout the facades of the houses. Like many non-urban

1 George Baker, “An Interview with Pierre Huyghe,” *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 80-106.

developments, Streamside Knolls was designed to appeal to those seeking to escape the city. This is a conscious strategy employed by AVR Realty. According to its website, the residences that it builds evoke the feeling of “traditional neighborhood parks of a bygone era.”² Individual lots in the development do not feature fences, which adds to the notion of community and to the parklike setting of the development. In aerial views of the neighborhood, property lines are visible only through the addition of tasteful hedges, or by the different styles in which neighbors mow their lawns. Streamside Knolls was consciously landscaped to promote the notion that residents live among nature. Given this foundational narrative, it is fitting that some areas of “wildness” have been allowed to remain, including a narrow corridor that connects to the Hudson River.

Streamside Knolls fits the definition of an exurb more than a suburb—an exurb is a community beyond the suburbs whose residents commute to urban areas to work. But it may still be placed within the aesthetic tradition of suburban construction in which residential developments are designed to appeal to those seeking the harmony and health benefits of nature. Since the late 19th century, escaping the city to live closer to nature has been popular with the mainly white middle classes who had the means to do so, and new styles of architecture and design were developed to meet this demand. There are traces of these ideas, and those associated with utopian communities designed to promote social harmony, that are still visible in suburban residential development, although these now tend to be limited to mainly cosmetic features.

Several sites close to Streamside Knolls are worth pointing out. Two miles away we find the Downstate Correctional Facility, a

2 AVR Realty Company website, www.avrrealty.com [accessed March 1, 2017].

maximum security prison home to 1,200 inmates. Another two miles from there is the Fishkill Correctional Facility, a medium-security prison; some of its buildings previously belonged to the Matteawan State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, built in 1892 and closed in 1977. Also nearby is the Dia: Beacon, which opened in 2003 in a former Nabisco factory building. Half a mile from there is the Beacon Sloop Club established by Pete Seeger in 1969 to raise awareness about environmental destruction of the Hudson River. The Gap Distribution Center, which was the largest employer in the area until a recent fire, is in central Fishkill, a short drive away. Also nearby is Camp Mariah, which each summer hosts thousands of low-income kids, mostly young people of color, who according to the camp's website "leave their city apartments and head into rural, suburban, and small town communities where the sights, sounds, and spirit of summer await them."³ This brief tour offers a microcosm of American land use, labor, environmentalism, incarceration, and racial politics. Considering the countless idiosyncratic stories that seem to peep out from under the hedges of banality, it is no wonder that Huyghe cited David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* as a reference for his project here.⁴

Streamside Knolls was still under construction when Huyghe began work on the project, which meant that it would be possible to witness the formation of the community. The idea behind the work was to create an event that had the potential to be repeated. In an interview with George Baker published in *October*, Huyghe stated that he "wanted to create a fiction that would lead to a fête, a celebration, an event that could be repeated... if we take up the metaphor of theater, we can call my intervention the creation of

3 The Fresh Air Fund website, www.freshair.org [accessed March 1, 2017].

4 "Streamside Day," Art 21 website, <https://art21.org/read/pierre-huyghe-streamside-day> [accessed March 1, 2017].



Figure 5.1.
Pierre Huyghe, *Streamside Day*
(film still), 2003, Super 16mm
film and video transferred to
digital Betacam, color, sound, 26
minutes. Courtesy of the artist
and Marian Goodman Gallery.

a script, after which comes the play—and even, a few years later, the possibility for the reinterpretation of this same play.”⁵ The event that he designed was called *Streamside Day* (fig. 5.1), and it featured a parade with floats, city service vehicles, music, food, and welcome speeches from the mayor of the town.

Huyghe made a film, also titled *Streamside Day*, which featured scenes from the celebration and also explored the desire for nature that may have attracted homeowners to Streamside Knolls in the first place. In the beginning of the film we see a reference to the Disney film *Bambi*, with a fawn wandering into a newly built home. In addition to the Disney reference, the landscape bears resemblance to Hudson River School paintings. Fantasy is interwoven with reality in the film, and the natural with the artificial. The animals that are shown seem wild, but have obviously been trained, while the wilderness that we see was consciously

5 Baker, “An Interview with Pierre Huyghe,” 84.



Figure 5.2.
Pierre Huyghe, *Streamside Day*
(film still), 2003, Super 16mm
film and video transferred to
digital Betacam, color, sound,
26 minutes. Courtesy of the
artist and Marian Goodman
Gallery.

landscaped to appeal to home buyers. Some scenes are staged while others are improvised, and some of the people onscreen are actors while others are residents. The large moon, which casts a soft glow over many of the scenes, is actually a lit-up balloon (fig. 5.2).

The film may be seen as one repetition of the original event, while subsequent exhibitions of the project offer further repetition. *Streamside Day Follies* was shown at Dia: Chelsea in 2003 (fig. 5.3). When visitors entered the exhibition, temporary walls would slowly move toward the center of the space, to create an enclosure that one could enter into. Inside, the film was projected onto the walls, which retreated backward once it had finished playing. This arrangement of space evokes the “folly,” which in addition to meaning “foolish,” also refers to decorative, uninhabited architectural structures common in British and French gardens in the 18th century. In thinking about “follies,” and the festivities depicted in the *Streamside Day* film, it is worth considering Bakhtin’s writings on the carnivalesque, which for him were inspired by the Feasts of Fools popular in England and France in the Middle Ages. These events were characterized by their reversal of the sacred and the profane, producing an upside-down world. For Bakhtin, the time of carnival was important because it produced social interaction among individuals who



Figure 5.3.

Pierre Huyghe, *Streamside Day Follies*, 2003, Automated moving walls, mural drawings. Installation at Dia:Chelsea, New York, 2003. Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery.

wouldn't normally associate, and allowed for the inversion of social hierarchies. It is worth noting that while carnival was associated with temporary, cyclical rituals, it was also theorized by Bakhtin as unfinished and dialogical. This meant that while social hierarchies often returned to normal afterward, what happened during carnival was not necessarily confined to that time—it leaked outward, influenced social relations and public spaces, and in certain cases even led to rebellion.⁶ The importance of the concept of carnival for durational public art is both in the notion of communal gathering and in the reversals of power that can occur when lines are blurred between actor and audience, performer and viewer.

6 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

In addition to suggesting the form of the folly, the configuration of space in the Dia exhibition was meant to prefigure plans for a community center in Streamside Knolls, to be designed by French architect Francois Roche. But the community center was ultimately not built and there are several possible reasons for this. First, it may have been due to a lack of interest from residents. As Herbert Gans argued in his 1967 study of Levittown in Nassau County, New York, many suburban homebuyers are not actually searching for a community or a social experience. As he puts it, “they want the good or comfortable life for themselves and their families... but mainly they came for a house and not a social environment.”⁷ Another reason, possibly more compelling, was suggested by art historian Amelia Barikin. In her book *Parallel Presents*, she writes: “In Huyghe’s work, both freed time and utopia are kept in a state of continuous construction ... it is not prescriptive. It is about preserving a sense of potential.”⁸ This embrace of irresolution is worth delving into in more detail. For Barikin, continuous construction suggests both the building of platforms, and a resistance to filling them in, which makes the unfinished nature of the architectural folly an apt metaphor.

It is worth comparing *Streamside Day* with two other projects that, while they may differ in form, context, and intention, feature a similar attention to sociability and celebration, and raise similar questions about duration in public art. Thomas Hirschhorn is known for the monuments and altars he sets up in public spaces. Many of these are dedicated to philosophers, and are often in front of large housing developments. They

7 Herbert J. Gans, *The Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 37.

8 Amelia Barikin, *Parallel Presents: The Art of Pierre Huyghe* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2012): 169, 160.



Figure 5.4.
Thomas Hirschhorn, *Gramsci Monument*, 2013. Performance view from Running Event, Fosta: “From Us to All,” July 23, 2013; Forest Houses, Bronx, New York. Courtesy of Dia Art Foundation, Photo: David Regen. © 2017 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris. Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery.

are constructed out of low-budget materials such as packing tape and cardboard, and printed-out signs and images. Given this DIY aesthetic, it is no surprise that the artist’s motto is “Energy=Yes! Quality=No!”⁹ For the *Gramsci Monument* (fig. 5.4), also commissioned by the Dia, Hirschhorn set up an installation in the courtyard of Forest Houses in the Bronx. He dedicated the monument to Antonio Gramsci, and set up a library filled with his writings. He hired local residents to run art classes, a newspaper, a radio station, a computer lab, and a grill. The installation lasted throughout the summer and was dismantled in the fall. In reviews of the project, some critics saw it as aesthetic colonialism, in which the art world parachuted in temporarily, brought with it money, resources, and outside attention, and then disappeared. One critic even described the project as a form of consciousness laundering, which is a common accusation of participatory or socially engaged art projects that provide a cathartic opportunity to release guilt without having to challenge one’s own privilege or power.

Art critic Whitney Kimball spoke to Forest Houses residents afterward to hear their thoughts on the project. The majority

9 Francesco Bonami, “Interview with Thomas Hirschhorn,” *Flash Art* 34, no. 216 (January/February 2001): 90.



Figure 5.5.
Craft Table and Fall Celebration for Ethiopian New Year, *Translation: Vickery Meadow*, Dallas, Texas, 2015. Photo: Carol Zou, courtesy of Carol Zou.

expressed positive feelings about the experience but wished that it could have lasted longer. In response to this sentiment, Dia curator Yasmil Raymond pointed out that the institution did not have the resources to sustain a more permanent manifestation of the monument. Hirschhorn added that permanence was never the intention. For him, the project demonstrated the importance of form and the autonomy of art. Many elements of celebration and community gathering were evident throughout the project, including performances, workshops, and open-mic nights. In the case of the *Gramsci Monument*, then, we see an offering made to a particular community, and an expression of desire for the services associated with the work to continue, which was not part of the original plan. As Hirschhorn has said, “I am an artist, not a social worker.”¹⁰

10 Thomas Hirschhorn quoted in Whitney Kimball, “How Do People Feel About the Gramsci Monument, One Year Later?” *Art F City*, Aug. 20, 2014.

My last example is based in Dallas and was originally commissioned by the Nasher Sculpture Center in 2013 to celebrate its 10-year anniversary. The Nasher commissioned 10 public sculptures in different sites around the city, as part of an exhibition titled the *Nasher XChange*. Rick Lowe was one of the invited artists, and proposed a project that would take place in Vickery Meadow, which is among the most diverse neighborhoods in Dallas and is one of the main sites for refugee resettlement. Initially the project was focused around pop-up white-cube gallery spaces, which were conceived of as a way to showcase artwork being made by neighborhood residents. After its first year, *Trans.lation* shifted into a community art center, and rented a storefront space in a strip mall inhabited primarily by Ethiopian-owned businesses and restaurants. Lowe hired a series of artists-in-residence to direct the organization and program the space. Carol Zou is the current artist-in-residence and manager of the project. She came to Dallas from previously working on yarn-bombing projects in Los Angeles, and after graduating with an MFA in Public Practice from Otis College of Art and Design. Classes and activities go on daily at *Trans.lation*, including language classes, painting and drawing, sewing, dance classes, a zine club, a radio program, a public art workshop, and a community garden. Anyone from Vickery Meadow can propose a class, and *Trans.lation* organizes and hires instructors and tries to provide resources. Zou is a community organizer as well as an artist, and she works with other organizations in Vickery Meadow that advocate for affordable housing and organize against evictions. Communal gatherings play a central role in bringing people together at *Trans.lation*, from the very first community barbecue to the frequent events and celebrations that it hosts, including Ethiopian New Year, Day of the Dead, and Eid (fig. 5.5).

Among the three works I have discussed, there are differences in terms of site and intention, and in the way they consider the

relationship between art and politics. While there is a ludic quality to each of these works, they also raise serious questions about race and power: *Streamside Day* implicitly illuminates fantasies and constructions of whiteness through its attention to myth and through its spatial and cultural references; *Gramsci Monument* provokes questions about aesthetic colonialism and the racialized disinvestment of urban spaces and public housing; while *Trans.lation* positions itself against systems of white privilege and power through localized cultural resistance, carried out mainly by women and people of color. Yet there are noteworthy similarities among these projects as well, including celebration, conviviality, and communal gathering. The carnivalesque plays a role in each of these works, in terms of the blurring of the lines between artists, participants, and observers. In each case, artists developed the framework of a tradition that could be taken up by participants. Each project also features literal or figurative platforms or structures that have the potential to be filled in or adapted. The continued duration of *Trans.lation* has several implications worth noting, such as the ongoing challenges of dealing with bureaucracy and securing funding. While it has taken on a more resolute form, it is possible to argue that it encourages continuous construction by acting as a platform that can be programmed and used by residents. As a community art project, it is embedded in what John Roberts has described as “the heteronomous particulars of the everyday.”¹¹ This implies that instead of the sense of potentiality that comes through irresolution, what distinguishes *Trans.lation* is the concreteness of situated practice, a point of differentiation that is central to current debates about the possibilities and limitations of art’s social responsibilities.

My intention here has been to reflect upon some of the decisions behind, and implications of, duration and ephemerality in public

11 John Roberts, *Revolutionary Time and the Avant-Garde* (London: Verso, 2015), 177.

art practice, not to ascribe value to one particular approach or another. Many of these issues have come up in recent discussions of site-specific work. Paul O'Neill and Claire Doherty reflect upon duration in their book *Locating the Producers*, published in 2011, which was the culmination of a research project designed to study long-term public artworks. Initially they were interested in attempting to counter the “parachute effect” associated with nomadic artists and curators who drop in, make their work, and drop out. In the introduction to the book, they write that their interest in duration was not intended to be a corrective to short-termism, but instead, came out of an interest in projects that “display an intentionally slowly-evolving discursive process that enables an exploration of the particularities of place in tune with the expressed needs of residents.”¹² What I found particularly interesting about their analysis was the notion that meaning and value emerged and expanded when projects took on a life of their own, once an offering was made and embraced, and once forms became generative and sustaining through repetition.

In conclusion, I'll return to the notion of a departure point, and the various gestures of adaptation present in the works I have discussed. In these gestures there is the potential for reciprocity and exchange, as platforms and structures are used or filled in, or remain figments of memory and symbolic value. In each of these works there are elements of the concrete and the symbolic, the poetic and the prosaic, and these elements are not opposed, but mutually constructive. Whether an event becomes tradition depends on a complex set of factors, including the desire of those involved, the intensity of experience and memory, and institutional support. The questions that I have raised remain open, but I hope

12 Paul O'Neill and Claire Doherty, *Locating the Producers: Durational Approaches to Public Art* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2011), 13.

they provoke further interest in the subtle and complex ways in which meaning shifts and transforms, brimming over in one place and accumulating in another.

Keynote Address

Nicolas Bourriaud

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Montpellier, France

This text has been adapted from the transcript of Bourriaud's keynote lecture, presented at the Nasher Sculpture Center, March 30, 2017.

Well, I am really happy to be here. And I decided not to have any images because I thought that you would have had a few of them earlier today. I just wanted to try to address Pierre Huyghe's work from the point of view, somehow being less discussed, which is the issue of categories, hierarchies, types, norms—everything that helps us to classify what we understand, what we see, what we think. And I think his work is an incredible philosophical moment concerning those issues. I wanted to start with something very factual. It's very recent news. Last March, a river in New Zealand became the first river in the world to be recognized as a living entity, with the legal status of a person, after a 170-year battle by the Māori people. The nation's parliament passed a bill to allow the Whanganui River to represent its own interests and advocate on its own behalf. It will be represented by two nominees, one appointed by the Māori community and one appointed by the government. So it's in a way a dialogical identity for a being, which is a river. I think that's a good start to the introduction to what I'm talking about today. Because our times are actually characterized by the systematic challenge of all the categories we are used to. It's questioning every classification we actually have. Genders, species, classes, objects. What is an object? Another question that is very spread out in contemporary philosophy. And, of course, the categories of art: painting, sculpture, video. It's quite difficult to think that these categories have remained the same in these past few years. So we are actually contributing to a huge movement of re-categorization. And, for example, I will start with something very simple that accompanies every discussion around the arts.

In the western world—something that actually now sounds slightly weird—we are taught, for example, that beauty is an idea. It's supposed to be an essence, an abstraction, something abstract. We have something called beauty as a category, and of course something very much related to the art world, obviously. And even

if we have actually diminished the presence of this notion in the 20th century, by not actually using the word “beauty” as much as someone from the 1920s. But still, it drives, in a way, our vision of what art should be – what an artwork should be. So as we are asked to define beauty as a concept, we’re not supposed to enumerate only beautiful things.

And that brings us back to a very seminal text, Plato’s *Hippias Major*, which has been taught all over the world in many different classes. In this dialogue between Socrates and Hippias, Plato speaks about the notion of beauty. Of course, in Socrates’s words, “Beauty is an essence, an idea. We are looking for what beauty is, not for what is beautiful.” Hippias, who is actually depicted in this dialogue as a kind of moron—we have to say that, no? When he is asked to define what beauty is, he’s supposed to talk about something very abstract, you know. Undefined. Maybe the notion of harmony, et cetera. And this stupid guy actually answers, “No. For me, beauty is like a pretty girl.” Just the most stupid answer to the question, ever. First, why a girl, when you know about the prevalence of homosexuality at the time of the ancient Greeks? Why not a beautiful person or a pretty person, for example? So Hippias is depicted as the perfect moron. The philosopher is not supposed to take beautiful things for beauty itself, obviously. That is what indicates that he or she is a philosopher. But in a way, if we think a bit more about the answer of Hippias, who states that beauty is not an idea, it’s a phenomenon, an accident, something that happens. He says a beautiful person or a beautiful girl, but it could be anything of that kind, obviously.

The answer of Hippias is based on the idea of the accident, against the essence or idea. He actually answers that beauty cannot be defined by any abstract answer, by any predefined idea of what it should be. And then, if we take his answer as such, it’s a bit more

interesting. He's not totally the moron that he was supposed to be in Plato's dialogue. The philosopher who actually thinks that beauty is an idea is a prisoner of this idea. He or she is a prisoner of this category. Because what art brings us is perpetual challenge to this notion of beauty, to the notion of art itself, obviously. It's not an idea, it's an accident. It's a being that happens to cross my path. This way of thinking—it's a family of thought that you can find all over the history of philosophy—is a movement called nominalism. It could also be what's called materialism, which states that there are no abstractions, no essence, no general beings, but only singular objects that are always redefining the class—or category, if you want—within which they are put away. I'm on Hippias's side on this, and Pierre Huyghe is on Hippias's side. The movement of disintegration and re-categorization that actually happens in his work shows us enough that he's not driven by the abstract notion of what art is, but that art *happens*. It's based on accidents. He's not controlling absolutely everything that he is doing. He is provoking things. He is framing phenomena. And this type of aesthetics corresponds much more to Hippias's idea.

Anyway, beauty, you could say—also, to question and challenge again this notion of those categories that we're all used to—beauty is a very occidental notion; the very part of western categories. In the Chinese language, for example, there's not really a difference between talking about beauty in the objective and the substantive. We cannot find the word “beauty” or the exact translation of the notion as such. Here again, they are on Hippias's side, somehow. The one philosopher who played a role in and was really influential and introduced a dialogue with Pierre Huyghe: Tristan Garcia, who's actually part of this object-oriented philosophy along with another philosopher, Quentin Meillassoux, who also had a very interesting dialogue with Pierre Huyghe. And the discussion that Pierre Huyghe has with either Tristan Garcia or Quentin

Meillassoux, is about a very specific question: “What constitutes reality?” Or less ambiguously: “What constitutes the world we live in?” It’s not only objects, obviously—that’s another category very much challenged by Pierre Huyghe’s work.

One of my favorite conceptual artists, Douglas Huebler—I quote from memory—was asked why he was not producing so many material works, answered that “the world is full of objects and I don’t want to add any more to them.” (He was actually producing a lot of things.) According to Tristan Garcia, the world is composed of things that will have a very different nature. Obviously, he totally disagrees with the American philosopher Levi Bryant, who wrote *The Democracy of Objects*, and who claims that there is only one type of being: objects. So Levi Bryant considers every aspect of reality as a category of objects. According to Tristan Garcia, the world is composed of, let’s say, “things,” like a red carpet. The color red, which is as much a thing—a being—as the red carpet, or my personal memories of the color red, or my personal memories of the red carpet—whatever. Those two things being equally part of reality. Or images of red things. They are all equal in composing what we call “reality,” and that’s why Tristan Garcia talks about the “flat ontology” to describe his philosophy. The “flat ontology” (he is not the only one to use this expression: Graham Harman, who is also an American, does) is a kind of new level of renegotiation between beings of a different nature, and I think it is the philosophical ground on which Pierre Huyghe is actually working for a long time now.

We have existing now, and for the past 10 years, at least, a turn toward objects—abstract, mainly—and what has been called object-oriented philosophy. And the background of this notion and indeed all object-oriented modes of thought is, according to me primarily, that of capitalism itself as an economic system.

This is inseparable from the process of reification, which is the transformation of those things into objects. Which is so natural to us that it seems to give the most immaterial objects the status of things and vice versa. So, in a way—when dominated by this capitalist system—life can appear as a moment of merchandising. Because the logic of capitalism is to increase its field wherever it can. And human beings, even, can be considered as a moment in this process of reification, of the transformation of beings into objects. In the 1990s, we were referring to relational aesthetics. It's true that the frontline was still focused on inter-human relationships, which was the base, the core of my book [*Esthétique relationnelle* (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 1998)]. And the core of the practices—the artistic practices—that I was describing in the book, starting in the beginning of the 1990s (also the beginning of the Internet, so there's obviously a link between the two): that human relationships were actually beginning to become commodities, somehow—things that could also be the basis for a market. This determined a lot of what worked at the time.

And now, it's life itself. So I think it's another way to increase our reason, and I tend to think of a new relational landscape, which is exceeding the inter-human. That is also what Pierre Huyghe's work is about. It has always been expanding these original problems. This way, it is still working on the frontline. And I could define this frontline today through an expression that has been used in a question a bit earlier today: The Anthropocene, this new era in which we are supposed to enter at this moment. A new era in which human activities are modifying deeply, not only the climate, but also the very conditions of life on this earth. The Anthropocene, which is this new period of time, also introduces a new set of parameters. In a way, it's a total reevaluation of our relationship with every force, every element with which we must coexist on this planet.

We have to [coexist], and I think that's the core of Pierre Huyghe's work in a way, but in a very subtle way.

And this very core problem is the renegotiation of the terms of our presence in the world with all things, with all beings, as well as our own technological creations, by the way, because machines, the living, the objects, and things in general are all actually *flat ontology*. All equal on this land. With all those elements, we have to reevaluate and renegotiate our presence. What could even be said about a kind of coalition between humans and some elements like animals, plants, trees, minerals, the atmosphere in general? Because they are all imperiled by a technological industry or system that is now clearly detached from civil society. It is a new political coalition, but it's not only between human beings but with all those elements at the same time.

The Anthropocene—as a notion, as a concept, as a way to approach the political transformation that we are actually facing now—appears also as a revelation of our own consciousness, the consciousness of the inhabitants of the globalized world. When the atmosphere itself is on its way to becoming a threat, this apparition, the emergence of this political coalition between the human and the nonhuman corresponds to what I call the “atomization of politics.” It's also, and that's what we can see today in the works of Pierre Huyghe, among others, it is the emergence of what I call a rational landscape, in which humans seek to occupy the same secondary position that the economic logic of globalization gives to raw materials—the same level of consideration given to fossil fuels, livestock, clouds, sunlight, and many others.

I think the power of Pierre Huyghe's work is to engage this new mapping of the world, to re-describe it, to cut anew all the categories that we are used to [...] and to draw, literally, a new

landscape. Because one of the roles of the artwork and the artist is to establish new cutting up of the frames and categories we use to understand the world, to represent it, of course, but also to act upon it. Pierre Huyghe was saying at some point there is no separation, but it is instead about continuity, talking about his work. I am very interested in his idea of this “dust of inference,” the fog or the residue of something that at some point, you cannot frame anymore. This idea of framing, delimiting new categories, trying to point the camera at the right place to describe something that is not yet categorized, that is purely emerging, something we are not used to, but that actually exists. That’s what his work is actually engaged in doing. Because what’s an artwork? Well, let’s go back to big questions, sometimes that’s good.

Materially, there are many ways to answer this question, but to stick with what we are interested in today, I would say that an artwork is necessarily a signal. This intuition was very much present in the writings of George Kubler, an American art historian I really like. An artwork is a signal and we actually consider artworks in museums, for example, because that is where those signals are lasting—they are sustainable. We can still address a painting by Vermeer or a work by Marcel Duchamp—whoever—because this signal came to us. And what does a signal need to sustain itself? Energy. And every artwork is accompanied by a very specific type of energy, which is, according to me, the complexity of its content. This is the energy that an artwork needs. And if we go to museums today, it’s because the artworks that we actually see, not all of them maybe, but most of them—depending on the person—they are still talking to us. We can still engage a dialogue with them. We still are able to take something out of them. Because this sustainability has been achieved, in a way. So museums are based on sustainable energy. Its complexity is inscribed in a form that drives the artwork and makes it resistant to time.

The artist is organizing the emission of a signal. He or she does it through gathering possible elements, something he or she finds in the environment next to the other, it's next to them most of the time. They are working on producing an object that is necessarily complex. Complex because it has to propose to us multiple layers of meaning to last, obviously. Because, if you have something that is too simple, if it's, let's say, spilling over its varied period of time, then within 10 years, it will be completely impossible to engage a renewed dialogue with it. The artwork has to re-create the conditions of the perpetuation of a dialogue. Its power is that it has to engage with what we can call builders or representatives throughout the centuries. I like this word "representatives." It's interesting because it's the idea of the weakness and the beholder as a weakness, that is something absolutely present everywhere in Pierre Huyghe's work.

When Marcel Duchamp said (in the 1957 lecture that he gave in Houston) that it's the beholder who makes the painting. That's exactly the way that we have to understand it. Once the beholder is not here anymore, when there is nothing to engage with, any artwork transforms itself into just material, an object. Nothing more than that. Liam Gillick, another friend of Pierre Huyghe, said, "My work is like the light in the fridge. It only works when someone opens the door." It's a fantastic way of saying it.

It's in the historical context of the Anthropocene that this new theoretical constellation I've mentioned before—object-oriented philosophy or sometimes it's called speculative realism—in which humans and animals, plants and objects, must be treated on an equal footing. Bruno Latour suggests the creation of a parliament of things, and Levi Bryant, whom I talked about earlier, talks about the democracy of objects. There's something happening there, obviously. Another philosopher referred to as a speculative

realist, Graham Harman, proposes an object-oriented philosophy, a philosophy that tends to free objects from the shadow of human consciousness, giving them a kind of autonomy, in a way. And putting collisions between things on an equal footing with relationships between thinking subjects, human beings, let's say. So these two types of relations differ for him only according to the degree of complexity. They have the same nature. Humans can be distinguished from others, says Graham Harman, by their status as sensual objects.

Quentin Meillassoux, another philosopher of the same family, presents a vision of what he calls an antirealistic world in which nothing can exist outside of a correlation between the subject and an object. On one side is thought and on the other is being; reality isn't the center, Meillassoux says. The human individual—us—is only one element among others in this kind of network that is called reality. Again, I'm trying to list those positions. With a democracy of objects, having mentioned before, Levi Bryant attempts to think, "An object for itself that isn't an object for the gaze of a subject for representation or cultural discourse." Bryant continues, "This in short is what the democracy of objects means, the claim that all objects equally exist, it's the claim that no object can be treated as constructed by another subject. In short, no object such as the subject or culture is the ground of all others." Then we are facing a kind of problem. A philosophical problem. We see that Pierre Huyghe actually gives an answer to this problem. If being becomes more important than anything else, and seeing someone as more important than the conscious perception we have of them, then the world turns into a pure horizontality, a flat ontology again. A kind of flat world in which no entity, of course, occupies the center. We've mentioned the notion before. Then the realm of politics, for example, transforms into a general ecosystem that must deal with human and non-human alike.

The recent exhibitions of Pierre Huyghe—and now I want to talk about the answers that we can find in his work—have focused on animal life. We’ve seen that. You know: bees, dogs, mollusks, bacteria. He is proposing, in a way what could be considered a hypothetical world without humans, in which life would come into being through the production of forms, and then yielding a quite unpredictable and accidental dimension. According to Huyghe, and this is the quote that I think is hyper important, “An exhibition is not meant to exhibit something to someone, but to exhibit someone to something.” I think this is the core of his work. I’ll try to explain why. Not “exhibit something to someone,” but “*exhibit someone to something*,” I repeat. In other words, it defines art as an experience. An experience that is defined not only by the riddle of the artist, but also by contingency: random, accidental; things that happen between the frames that the artist is producing. And the viewer, the beholder, is assigned the role as active witness. He or she is being exhibited to something. And I’m quoting Pierre Huyghe, who describes this idea: “I’m trying to be indifferent to the human presence near the work to avoid infantilizing people with categorization or some kind of exhibition program. Instead, I’m trying to break that down because the object of the exhibition itself is the object I’m interested in.” No other object is clearly interesting enough. The only interesting object is the exhibition itself, which is the set (I will talk about it later), the kind of theater on which those things coexist and have a kind of coactivity.

In a way, every Pierre Huyghe exhibition could be considered as proof or the hypothesis of the idea of the “active multitude.” It is *multitude*, obviously, because the elements are numerous. Sometimes, the bees have more population in one of his exhibitions; sometimes it’s the flu virus, or animals in general in an aquarium, et cetera. And of course, I’m focusing on animals because they provide a better example, but think about all of the elements that

are co-present in every exhibition as participants of this multitude, the “active multitude” as even more important. Because things happen behind them, actually, during exhibitions. In a way, there is a comparison that can be made. It’s with a demonstration, for example, by the French philosopher Jean-Claude Milner, who defined demonstration as an event where every participant thinks he or she is many. That is the difference between the popular protest or the anti-ornamental mass that Siegfried Kracauer, sees in the big German cities in the 1930s. There’s a big difference between this active multitude and a passive, manipulated crowd, which really is, in a word, a totalitarian regime. Activity and passivity are the frontier; it is the line between these two. In a way, exhibitions should be (and this is the model that Pierre Huyghe is proposing) revolutions every time. It’s the maximum degree of activity.

Because it says something that is very deep, I think, politically speaking, without even using the words, without even showing it, just instigating the notion work-by-work. We don’t wish to be passive, we want to be active. It is from this perspective that the encounter that I had in the early 1990s with Pierre Huyghe and the idea of relational aesthetics actually occurred. It is something that is at the very root of his work, which is a symbolic distribution of the active and the passive in the field of art. One could also speak about a new mode of sharing in time and space between the artist and the beholder, if beholder is still the correct word—I am not sure.

The recent exhibitions of Pierre Huyghe then, which focus on animal life, define art as an experience. I repeat again, *exhibit someone to something*. But it is also very interesting that there is never a clear distinction between this direct experience that the visitor of an exhibition is exposed to and its image and all its offspring—everything that is generated by the experience. Again,

it's very simple. There are no hierarchies, in a way, between the presence at an event organized by Pierre Huyghe and all the different types of objects that we generate in the future, after departing them. And it's really important, because there is a kind of idea of cross-pollination in every project he makes. It's not only a metaphor, because of the use of bees—which would be a bit easy—but it's a method, it's a state of mind, it's this activity at the very heart of the artistic practice. It has to generate something. It has to produce things. It has to cross-pollinate in many directions. That's why in this attempt to propagate the life and the effects of this experience in many directions, objects, fields, you know, other exhibitions, et cetera, we see chains actually being implemented. We see how every project that he does becomes a kind of sacred trajectory, something dynamic and never closed by the limits of the exhibition itself.

I have been listing a few patterns, which are all linked to a more general movement, I would say, which brings us back to philosophy and the subject-object relationship. And I think that's the main figure that's being attacked by the exhibitions of Pierre Huyghe: this relationship that we think of as totally natural between a subject and an object as defining the art experience. It's part of the Western thought, at least since Descartes and Kant, but we can also go back to Greece. It determines, very deeply, the relationship between the viewer and the work. And if this subject/object relationship is being attacked today, especially in Pierre Huyghe's exhibitions, it's also in the name of critiquing anthropocentrism, obviously. In this regard, we may note that ever since the 1960s, the leading pattern of contemporary thought has been a systematic critique of the concept of "center." Decentering, obviously, as decategorizing this very important idea. Of course, it came out of: ethnocentrism, theocentrism, eurocentrism, anthropocentrism, et cetera. But

the current proliferation of these terms demonstrates that the *a priori* rejection of any centrality is the great cause of our times, and the reasons are numerous and would need, obviously, one hour more to start talking about it. Referring to Pierre Huyghe's work, I would say that he actually produces this abstract of his exhibitions. This equalization between elements that are "normally" supposed to be hierarchized.

The center as a figure represents this foil for contemporary thought, but it is the human subject that is the supreme center, obviously. And here the answer that Pierre Huyghe gives to this problem is much subtler than a simple inversion of the terms. But the real crime of humanity—if we go back to the figure of the Anthropocene—is colonial spaces. This cannot be denied. Since the dawn of time, human populations have invaded, occupied neighboring kingdoms where different, very distinct realms and universes constitute distinct realities. We are really talking about a colonial attitude.

But the problem is that too often contemporary thinkers, who, instead of trying to redefine the relationships between Kant's specifics and others, end up contributing to the considerations of other types of relationships between humans and the world and whatever else is not them, and they have a tendency to reduce philosophy to a kind of bad conscience that is constantly ruminating. A single act of repentance that, according to me, is not enough and doesn't produce enough. The difference with Pierre Huyghe's work here is absolutely clear: There is no fetishism of the peripheral in his work. Why? Because there is no periphery. The very notion has been completely erased, because now there's no center either. And this is something that we can see in the forms themselves.

What we see in the work of Pierre Huyghe is a multi-theater. A set where a co-presence is always organized. I quote him again:

I still control certain conditions, but not the growth, not the way things unfold and develop and evolve. Instead, the exhibition is an organism that diffuses endless images, rather than producing one image targeted or framed beforehand. As I said, the works are porous, they leak out or into each other, and their material realities exist with or without the gaze of a person.

This is, I think, a perfect definition of this attitude and of the way an artwork is, first of all, an attempt to frame something, frame a situation. Redefining, remapping the context we live in.

Pierre Huyghe has compared a garden to a factory as a kind of system of equivalence between different production systems that are supposed to be different, but which, by the way, could be compared. This kind of ever-shifting reproduction. The bees always do the same thing, they populate their environment and here lies the task that Pierre Huyghe assigns to art. The exhibition proceeds through a kind of cross-breeding of art by nature of the human, by the animal, by the image, by the biological or the geological, sometimes. It is a space of coexistence. It is a space of interspecies relationships. It is a space where there is no center at all, but a redistribution of every possible set of relationships between us as beholders, as witnesses, and the rest of the world. This is what I call “coactivity.” The place we live in—the world—is a space of co-activities. Perhaps this is why Pierre Huyghe is so interested in the form of the aquarium, by the way. First, it’s a kind of theater; also, it is a place where the living and the nonliving establish interesting contact. A place where you can find immersed fragments of rocks and ruins, fish, crustaceans, a crab nested in a Brancusi sculpture, microorganisms taking the color of the environment, for example. Huyghe says about this: “I explore the equivalence that can exist between what unfolds within the aquarium and an emotion or a situation experienced by the one on the outside: us.” That’s the definition of a set—clearly—of a stage, even. I think the stage could

have been, also, the leading pattern to revisit every work that Pierre did since the beginning of the 1990s. It is always a stage. It is always a set. It is always a place where others are invited to participate. A museum is not exactly an aquarium, but it is a structure that separates the living from the frozen; culture from nature—another big opposition which actually defines us and also defines an ideology, because the division between nature and culture is purely ideological, but this discussion will lead us very far.

But here, in Huyghe's piece called *Zoodram*, for example, all the different aquariums that he did: the vapor, the drips of water, the crawling insects; you can find many, many elements that define the usual order in a way. When Pierre Huyghe defines an exhibition as a place to exhibit someone to something, he indicates that the traditional categories of passivity and activity no longer have a reason to exist. The active agent is not necessarily the human individual, nor is the object necessarily inert. The subject-object relationship does not inevitably represent a relationship of domination by the first over the second. That's one of the reasons provided by Pierre Huyghe's work. "At some point," Huyghe says, "there is no separation, but it is instead about continuity." It is the quote I read at the very beginning, but now has a very different meaning: "I am interested in this idea of the 'dust of influence,' the fog or the residue of something that at some point you cannot frame anymore." Reframing is the core of the story. It starts with representing or mapping, by all means, the world as it is now and then and trying to prolong it and make permanent all data that it constitutes. And then, it also means summoning, calling up all the possible participants to this. The Anthropocene, which is the background for this, is also a space for renewed promiscuity, in a way. It is a brutal conjoining of all realms and spheres into a space that is actually devoid of symbolic boundaries.

This image of the universe without fixed boundaries, without a scheme where everything touches everything because everything is part of the same chain, allows us to better understand the ambition of Pierre Huyghe's work. Again, not to exhibit something to someone but exhibiting someone to something. Because in the Anthropocene, everything is being exposed and the subject has lost its monopoly on the gaze, even on the presence, toward the artwork. We are all representatives. It's what I've been calling the "atomization of politics." And if, for example, Pierre Huyghe tends to empty his work of all traces of personal subjectivity, as you may have seen it in the previous presentations, and shift focus more on the viewer, there is this great presence of the autobiographical dimension in his work. Which is also very interesting because it is very discreet, very subtle. Consider the song, for example, sung by Kate Bush, "Babooshka," [played as part of Huyghe's installation *The Host and the Cloud*, 2009-10] which was something he was obsessed with when he was 15, 16 years old, listening to it at parties.

I have not yet seen the work on view here at the Nasher [*La Deraison*, 2014], the sculpture that I think Huyghe saw every day when he was going to high school. But it's not mentioned in any information about the piece at all. It is only small fragments of his biography that are present as kind of clues in the work. It reminds me of a recollection you can make in psychoanalysis, for example, in which signs make their way, sometimes painfully, through multiple layers of screen memories.

And I mention these autobiographical elements, which are almost invisible in his work, to insist on the fact that the art of today is not a space in which the artist expresses the content of his or her Cartesian cogito ["I think, therefore I am."]. It is not about the ego expressing itself. It is not necessarily centered on his or her personality or vision. Of course, it has to be here,

but it is not the main element, it is not the content, actually, wishing to exist.

I think that the proposition that Pierre makes is the one of choral art. It is not only the artist who speaks, it is the choir of elements. And this is also a very important pattern in his work, this active multitude I was referring to. Because in a way, we cannot live, or we don't live in the same world anymore. It is not possible for the ego as we know it to go on existing in this new landscape. We are living in an immense social network, which is oriented to things, or objects, and commerce. Our intimacy, even, gets lost, as if it was in a kind of maze, fragmented, mediated by objects or by events. And it is even more puzzling because there is this injunction to expose yourself all the time. This kind of skinless idea that is characteristic of the Anthropocene, this promiscuity and skinlessness.

The objective regime of intimacy in a world that is ruled by information technology and algorithms has changed. And our memories are, as in Pierre Huyghe's work, taking the form of traces, clues left inside a network, like the footprints of an animal in the forest. This last example to say that the strength of Pierre Huyghe's work comes from his ability to map this new landscape that we live in, and its main element—the most important one—is the renegotiation of the presence of the human being with all the others surrounding us. But we have to understand, it is really important to insist on this: Pierre Huyghe never gives up on the human. It would be totally wrong to consider that this flatness is a depreciation or elimination of the human being from his perspective. He never gives up on the human. He does not represent the world as a nonhuman space.

It gives credit to what I think—in a way, getting back to relational aesthetics—that art exists only in the dimension of the encounter.

If we want to identify it with a mathematical figure, it would be the symbol omega in mathematics, which means: the infinity of primes plus one. It is the plus one that, according to me, defines the artistic experience. It can be qualified with the symbol omega: infinity of primes plus one. It is a unique encounter. It can be virtual or otherwise, a varied material, or otherwise, that transforms an object that could be anything. It could be a speech, could be a gesture, could be a sound, could be a drawing, could be a sculpture, whatever. There is always a plus one. And this idea of the infinity of primes plus one leads me to think that I have no idea what art is. If I knew what it was, I would not be that interested anymore, I think.

And that is this element, this plus one, that could be defined as the supreme point of meaningfulness, in a way. It is a space where everything makes sense: Art. Since meaning, and of course meaning comes from the encounter, is the precondition for artwork to exist, what I really think is incredibly strong in Pierre Huyghe's work is the fact that most of the objects and the things he actually presents are transitional; they are making a link between something and something else. And they never remain refined for long. It's a perpetual transformation through the image of the chain, as I mentioned before. The separate, the trajectory. But this keeps the world alive in many different ways under many different forms and shapes. And that's the conclusion.

Biographies

2017 Nasher Prize Laureate Pierre Huyghe

Huyghe was born in 1962 in Paris; he lives and works in Chile and New York. He studied at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Paris. In 2013, his retrospective opened at Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, then traveled to Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2014) and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2014-2015). He has had numerous international solo exhibitions at such venues as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2015); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2010); Tate Modern, London (2006); Dia Center for the Arts, New York (2003); French Pavilion, Venice Biennale (2001); Kunstverein München, Munich (1999); and Secession, Vienna (1999). Huyghe has also participated in a number of group exhibitions such as the 14th Istanbul Biennial (2015); Documenta 13 and 11, Kassel (2012 and 2002); 6th Sydney Biennale (2008); *theanyspacewhatever*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2008); Whitney Biennial (2006); and *Traffic*, CAPC musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux (1996), curated by Nicolas Bourriaud. He is also a participant in the 32nd Bienal de São Paulo (2016). Huyghe has been the recipient of many awards and honors, including the Kurt Schwitters Prize, Hannover (2015); Roswitha Haftmann Prize, Zürich (2013); Contemporary Artist Award; Smithsonian Museum's Contemporary Artist Award, Washington (2010); Hugo Boss Prize, New York (2002); Special Jury Prize, 49th Venice Biennale (2001); and DAAD Berlin Artists-in-Residence, Berlin (1999-2000). Huyghe's work is in the collection of many museums such as Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Tate, London; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; and several foundations like Fondation Louis Vuitton, Fondation Pinault, and LUMA Foundation.

Keynote Speaker, Nicolas Bourriaud
Director of La Panacée art center,
Montpellier, France

Bourriaud (born 1965) is a French curator, writer, art critic, and author of theoretical essays on contemporary art. Bourriaud was the Gulbenkian curator of contemporary art at Tate Britain, London, where he curated *The Tate Triennial: Altermodern* (2009). He co-founded and was co-director of the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, from 1999 to 2006. He founded the contemporary art magazine *Documents sur l'art*, of which he was director from 1992 to 2000, and worked as a Parisian correspondent for *Flash Art* from 1987 to 1995. He was director of the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts, in Paris from 2011 to 2015. In 2015, he was appointed director of the future Contemporary Art Center of Montpellier, France, due to open in 2019. His writings have been translated into more than 15 languages, and his publications include *Radical* (Sternberg Press/Merve Verlag, New York/Berlin, 2009), *Postproduction* (Lukas & Sternberg, New York, 2002, English edition, Les presses du reel, Dijon, 2004, French edition), *Formes de vie. L'art moderne et l'invention de soi* (Editions Denoël, Paris, 1999), and *Relational Aesthetics* (Les presses du réel, 1998, French edition, English edition, 2002).

Moderator, Pavel Pyš
Curator of Visual Art, Walker Art Center

Pyš joined the Walker in 2015 after four years as Exhibitions & Displays Curator at the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds, England. Hailing originally from Warsaw, the Australian-Polish curator and writer has contributed to a range of solo and group exhibitions in the United Kingdom and beyond, including exhibitions with artists David Diao, Robert Filliou, Christine Kozlov, Katrina Palmer, Vladimir Stenberg, and Elaine Sturtevant, as well as the group exhibitions *Carol Bove/Carlo Scarpa* (2015); *The Event*

Sculpture (2014); *Indifferent Matter: From Object to Sculpture* (2013) and *1913: The Shape of Time* (2012) at the Henry Moore Institute; *We Will Live, We Will See* (2011) at the Zabłudowicz Collection (as part of the inaugural Zabłudowicz Collection Curatorial Open); and *To See an Object, To See the Light* (2011), at the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin, Italy. His writing has appeared in numerous publications, including *ArtReview*, *Mousse*, *Frieze*, and *Art Monthly Australia*, and he has published essays on artists, including Carol Bove, Michael Dean, and Fredrik Værsløv. Pyś has also served on judging panels for the Aesthetica Art Prize and the Leonard James Little Fine Art Prize at the University of Manchester.

Editor, Leigh Arnold, Ph.D.

Assistant Curator, Nasher Sculpture Center

Dr. Arnold organized the inaugural Nasher Prize Graduate Symposium and serves as editor for the *Graduate Symposium Compendium*. In addition, at the Nasher she has curated exhibitions with such artists as Piero Golia, Mai-Thu Perret, Kathryn Andrews, Ana Mendieta, Richard Serra, and Roni Horn. Dr. Arnold is currently working on the first U.S. presentation of sculpture by Elmgreen + Dragset, as well as a historical reinterpretation of Land art that focuses on women who were actively involved in the movement. She holds a bachelor of arts in art history from the University of Nebraska and a master of arts in aesthetics from the University of Texas at Dallas. In 2016, Dr. Arnold received her doctoral degree in aesthetics from the University of Texas at Dallas, where she wrote on Robert Smithson's unfinished projects in Texas.

Presenter

Noni Brynjolson, University of California, San Diego

Brynjolson is a Ph.D. candidate in art history, theory, and criticism at the University of California, San Diego. Her research examines

social justice and use value in contemporary community-based art, and focuses on long-term, neighborhood-based projects that claim to encourage civic participation. She is a member of the editorial collective of *FIELD: A Journal of Socially Engaged Art Criticism*, founded and edited by Grant Kester. In January 2014 she curated the exhibition *On the Beach: Art and Public Space on the California Coast* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, featuring work by Suzanne Lacy, Andy Goldsworthy, Helen and Newton Harrison, and Border Arts Workshop. In addition to *FIELD*, her writing has been published in the books *Desire Change: Contemporary Feminist Art in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017, edited by Heather Davis) and *Craft on Demand: The New Politics of the Handmade* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017, edited by Anthea Black and Nicole Burisch).

Presenter

Pietro Scammacca, The Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London

Scammacca finished his secondary education in Beijing, where he was exposed to the Chinese contemporary art scene after growing up in Paris. He studied the history of art at Goldsmiths, University of London and is now completing his master's in global conceptualism at the Courtauld Institute of Art. His areas of interest include the intersections of art and ecology along with Deleuzian philosophy. His recent research includes the convergences between elements of Baroque culture and certain contemporary art practices. He has recently co-curated an exhibition at the Palazzo Biscari, a prominent Baroque palace in Sicily, and is planning to launch additional projects in the same space.

Presenter

Rebecca Starr, University of Leeds

Starr is a Ph.D. candidate at the School of Fine Art, History of Art, and Cultural Studies at the University of Leeds, where her research

interests include Marxist aesthetics, critiques of capitalism, commodity aesthetics, postwar French philosophy, relational aesthetics, and contemporary French history. Rebecca's dissertation focuses on the practices of artists mentioned in Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* (including Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Pierre Huyghe, and Matthieu Laurette), Francophone literature, and developments in French culture (1990-2010), and analyzes the social, political, and economic contexts of these artists' work. Her dissertation also focuses on the nature of exchange within these recent practices and will seek to analyze this within the context of philosophical deliberations on temporality. Rebecca has a master of arts in the history of art, also from the University of Leeds.

Presenter

Ursula Ströbele, Universität der Künste Berlin

Ströbele studied art history, economics, and information science in Düsseldorf, Paris, and Wuppertal. Her master's thesis dealt with the "Funeral Monument of Cardinal Richelieu at the Église de la Sorbonne" and she received her Ph.D. in 2010 at the Heinrich Heine University in Düsseldorf for her research about the sculptural reception pieces (*morceaux de réception*) of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in Paris (1700-1730). Ströbele is working on her postdoctoral project on the boundaries of sculpture at the intersection of natural sciences, bio-art, and digital technologies since the 1960/70s. She examines contemporary art forms such as sculpture as performance, time-based, living, and virtual phenomena in sculpture. Furthermore, she is co-founder of the scientific network "Theory of Sculpture," financed by the DFG, together with Prof. Dr. Martina Dobbe (Academy of Fine Arts, Düsseldorf). As curator she has realized the exhibition series "Sculpting (Virtual) Realities" at TRAF0 in Stettin and other shows. Since 2012 she has been working at the Institute of Art History and Aesthetics of the University of the Arts (UDK) in Berlin.

Presenter

Emilie Walsh, University of Melbourne

Walsh is a Ph.D. candidate at Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne, supervised by Dr. Toby Juliff and Ms. Lou Hubbard and in cotutelle with Rennes University in France, supervised by Dr. Ivan Toulouse. She has a master's in fine art and a master's in contemporary art history from Aix-Marseille University. Her research and art practice focus on narrative in contemporary art, and especially the use of the image and narrative of adventure in contemporary art practices.

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