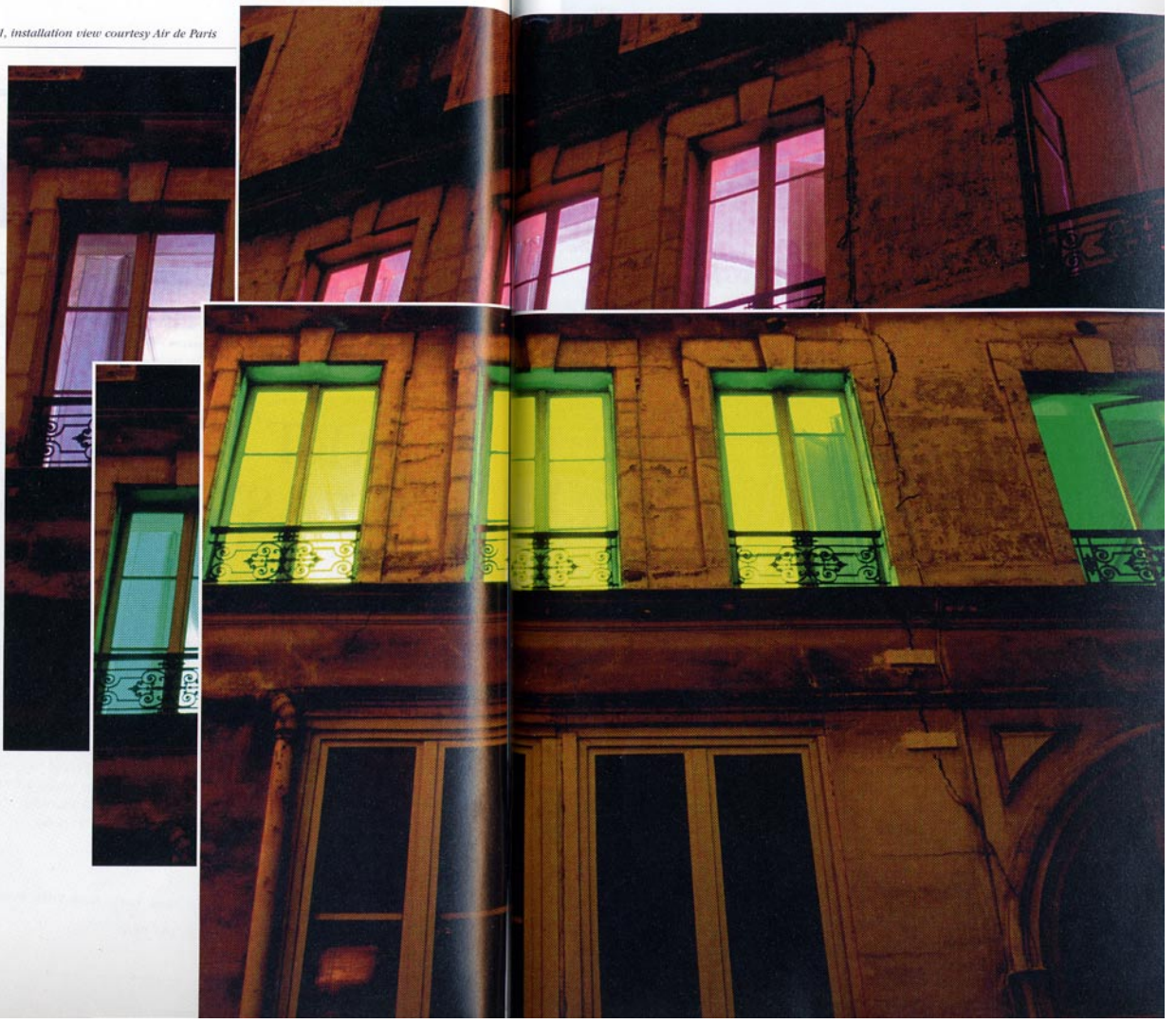


PARRENO



ONE WAY OR ANOTHER WE ARE GOING TO LIVE IN A FLUID UNIVERSE

In a recent interview, David Lynch said that the only thing he was sure about Mulholland Drive was that the film would start with an image of the road sign, Mulholland Drive, under the headlights, and then that a series of small stories would be linked together. *"The images are no longer beautiful, but chains are"*. In Parreno's artistic vocabulary, the chain is the dynamic structure that leads to the production of forms. It is the process which, for example, in the making of a project (be it a film, a building, or an exhibition), links pre-production to production and to post-production. All too often, the narrative is narrowed down to one of these sequences, Parreno explains, *"however sense and narrative come from the whole series of events that occur in, and even in-between, these sequences. Sense and narrative come from the whole continuum of the chain"*.

A film does not only tell a story. It is part of a story. Perhaps this is all too obvious but why is it that we cannot find novels inspired by films? We only find novels based on film scenarios, which is completely different. Through this example, Parreno expresses his extreme suspicion towards the idea of the scenario as an object (which can, in some cases, be turned into a book), but also towards how we apprehend images as objects, as the sole and ultimate result of the production process. *"I don't believe in a projective model,"* Parreno explains. Does everything always start with a scenario and end up as an object?

Through collaboration, Parreno seems to have found a mean for rendering the chains of production and moments of irresolution more visible, more legible. *"The projects I am interested in are those that brim over,"* he explains, *"either because they contain many more ideas than forms, or many more forms than ideas. These are moments of irresolution, moments of imbalance which continue to fascinate me. In fact, I am much more interested in proceedings than in resolutions"*.

For his recent exhibition at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Parreno decided that he wanted to trigger such a proceeding by working with someone he has never worked with before, and without any pre-established idea of what might come out of the encounter. He chose to work with Jaron Lanier, who is considered to have coined the concept of virtual reality. Lanier and Parreno rapidly found common ground for discussion in the conflict between resolution and irresolution of images. (PP No resolution JL Yeah. Resolution is an idiot's game) *"One of the things I do,"* Lanier first said after accepting Parreno's proposition to collaborate, *"is to work with neuroscientists by inventing computer models to screen the brain activities. Usually the work takes a long time, and it is very hard to point to anything specific. However, in the last few years there have been extraordinary advances, such that we are now pretty sure we have come up with a computer model of how visual memory works. We think we understand the signals that neurones exchange for creating a new visual memory as well as for recognising something seen from an old memory"*. And, incidentally, during this first conversation they had, Lanier even produced a statement which corresponds to the loose conceptual structure, or narrative cloud, Parreno was aiming for during the initial preparations for this exhibition: Virtual worlds are shared. Virtual worlds are the first kind of reality which is very malleable, very flexible, like a dream, but also shared by other people. That is what is so special about it. So, if we had this ability to very quickly create what exists in a virtual world, we could also have the potential for a new form of communication. I like to call this form of communication 'post-symbolic'. This means that instead of trading symbols that refer to things or evoke things, you would actually make the things. Instead of using the word house or museum, you could just suddenly make one. You could imagine this form of communication having some of the qualities of a dream, in that it might be fantastical, moving through many places and through many associations. But, at the same time, it would have conversational elements, with multiple people contributing, a back and forth quality and a collaborative continuity. And obviously it would be under human control, so it would not involve the loss of control like a dream, but would be guided more like a conversation.

BOILER: *You once said: "Nowadays beauty resides in chains, not in images". I think our conversation about your present way of working might as well start from this sentence.*

PP: Yes, of course, and I feel I should make it clear immediately what I mean as a 'chain': it's a dynamic structure which produces forms that are part of it. 'Beautiful' means 'remarkable' to me. I love this word, it's Quasimodo's complaint, he always says: "*Belle, belle*".

A production is divided into three phases: pre-production, production and postproduction. They depend on each other. The story, the meaning, actually develops when such moments are connected, chained together. An image, a scene or a movie can be considered as an element of a wider narration of which they belong and which they are the elements of. The chain I am talking about is a kind of space/time dimension, the time interval where things happen.

A movie doesn't simply tell a story, it is part of a story. That is very clear, but strange enough there are no novels inspired by movies. This is another way to see things, without always considering projections, projections of objects, scenarios. I don't believe in such a pattern: can everything really start with a scenario and end with an object? Is there really always a happy ending?

The degree of resolution of your ideas depends on an economic choice which either you make or is imposed on you.

For example in architecture, you start with a project and then get to a simplified resolution or to an exacerbated resolution. Projects develop along a cursor: high resolution/low resolution. But I am more interested in procedures than in resolutions.

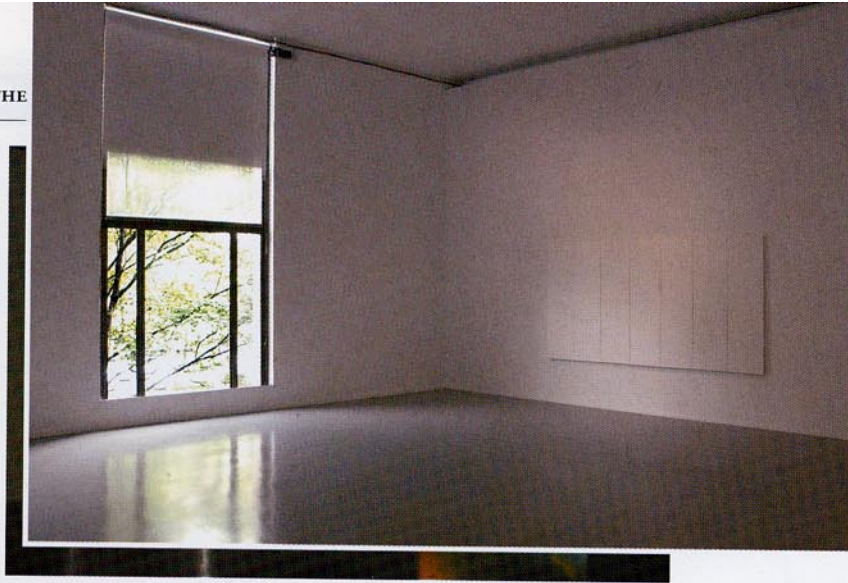
Starting from an image, or from a moment considered as an image, you might read the whole work backwards finding all the connections, the chains, like you can read a book starting from its end. That's a real experience of writing and reading. Some art works are incredible scores. "*You know doc, when something happens it can leave traces of itself behind, it's like when you burn toast.*"

There are things everybody can see. You cannot say that Liam Gillick's books are the scenario for his plastic works: first of all, they don't appear in the same order, they come parallel to his work; and they are part of each other. Similarly, you cannot say that Carsten Holler's hermeneutics is his tool.

BOILER: *It seems all kinds of collaboration between artists and architects are motivated by the research upon the difference between conceiving and realising a project, just like the work you share with François Roche. When can we find this common interest of architects and artists for formulas of exhibition and experimentation, and for ephemeral, undetermined forms?*

PP: Such issues sprouted in the '50s, in arts and architecture. Such questions were asked in Black Mountain College in a precise but soft way. Rausenberg's White Series Paintings are a very good example. Somehow abstract impressionism strongly influenced our generation.

The issue of immanence and contemporaneity is ancient.



Like Thomas Pynchon wrote, “one of the worst effects of the ‘50s is to believe that those years would last indefinitely.”

So far, the history of architecture is still a history of objects. The same applies to history of art. I have never seen books about the history of exhibitions, except for two or three titles.

BOILER: *It’s amazing to see how the concentration upon the object recurs. It was very clear and strong in the ‘90s. How do you consider the approach the artists adopted in the ‘60s and ‘70s had, in relation to yours?*

PP: From the ‘80s on, Sony and Thompson have been after the issue of resolution. The point is not to produce images but to produce images with a good resolution. This idea really was like a virus.

The issue was widely discussed in the ‘60s and the ‘70s. It is still discussed today, but just as a working hypothesis. Have you seen the movie “Pleasant Ville”? It tells the story of two teenagers from the ‘90s who find themselves in a TV series of the ‘50s. Under their influence the city’s inhabitants slowly shift from black and white to colour.

It is interesting to notice that at the end of the movie the town is just partially in fujicolor, but not completely.

Greil Marcus compares Pleasant Ville to a Don Siegle’s movie they remake every ten years, “The invasion of the body snatchers.” Have you seen that movie? It’s a tale about aliens devouring humans and replacing them, until they create a society of soulless replicants.

Those are traumatic ideas.

BOILER: *Isn’t there all the same a kind of dynamics, that could explain why such issues appear again and again?*

PP: Yes, there is a kind of liberal dynamics. When you have a Fine Arts workshop, you can see that resolution is the biggest problem art apprentices seem to have. They typically ask: “Your idea is fine, but is it resolved in what you show us?” There is still the tendency to solve a problem within a form. It’s exciting when the content overflows beyond the form. The irresolution moments are the most interesting ones, whether because there are too many ideas and not enough forms, or because there are too many forms and not enough ideas.

Fluids dynamics is more interesting, its mechanics is more fascinating when there is no balance.

BOILER: *These questions have already been asked by Lyotard in 1985 in the exhibition called "Les Immatériaux" (Immaterial things). Was that exhibition important for you and for the artists of your generation?*

PP: It was important for me. It was a grand exhibition. At the same time it offered an analysis and an experience; it answered all the questions about virtuality in the '80s. A few years later, I met Lyotard again and I could talk with him a little bit about that exhibition. The catalogue of Les Immatériaux was wonderful. It gave information about experiences shared among various people during a certain period of time; a sort of university web had been used to facilitate correspondence. That was the first time the Internet was used as a tool.

The setting of the exhibition was absolutely surprising, the way the different objects and experiences had been placed. There were no texts. The experience was unique. It's impossible to describe it if you weren't there. It's like narrating a dream.

BOILER: *Was it a philosophical exhibition, like some have complained?*

PP: Les Immatériaux was an exhibition, a way to organise content within space and time. But that was very different than writing a book or developing a philosophical concept. That was its beauty: it was not a conceptual exhibition. It was really an experience, it was very fluid. One of the most surprising aspects of the exhibition was the absence of concepts: there were lots of ideas but no concepts.

Later on Lyotard told me he intended to realise a new exhibition, called "Resistance". What kind of resistance, I thought? You immediately think of moral issues. But the first thing they teach you at school, when you study physics, is that friction force is unimportant. There it is: after Les Immatériaux, there come the warming up, imponderability, parallel energies, resistance.

BOILER: *Why not try to realise this second exhibition? That could really work against the wide spread amnesia of history of exhibitions.*

PP: You are actually right. An effort should be made to find his notes. Did he write about his project? It would be fascinating to dive into that. Posthumous books are published; why do not implement a posthumous exhibition?

BOILER: *It would also be an occasion to reintroduce some slowness in the world of exhibitions, which, after the '90s, has been hectic as far as the number of exhibitions is concerned. It would be another form of resistance.*

PP: I think this is a responsibility artists must have. Maybe, one of the ways of resisting, or to doubt, like Carsten Holler would say, is to slow down rather than accelerate or create a new form of addiction: an addiction to inertia.

BOILER: *When you talk with other artists about this kind of alternative, what kind of project do you imagine: are you thinking of exhibitions, works, and publications?*

PP: This is an issue Vicinato often considered. A book, as an archive and as a support could be the solution. Maybe in a certain moment reading will become fundamental again. Because reading is also a physical state, your concentration is strong, and is floating. It is very pleasant to leave your book for a moment, and start dreaming.

I wish I could see a large book on the history of medical representation. From Leonardo Da Vinci to virtual reality and synthesis images, every representation technique has been invented by medicine. It would be fascinating to trace such history. It ought to be a collective work, using different know-hows, starting with the help of historians. It would be a collective work of subjective points of view because it would also be a poetic enterprise. [see more on the web](#)

BY HANS ULRICH OBRIST