

Céline Kopp

'Doesn't one produce exhibitions based on a text, as one would produce a film based on a script? Could an exhibition be a form of cinema without a camera?'¹ These enquiries, expressed by Philippe Parreno in 1995 at the moment of his first collaboration with Rirkrit Tiravanija, could at the same time be part of a conversation held today. Exchanges, dialogues and collaborations are indeed at the centre of the work of a generation of artists who emerged in Grenoble in the 1990s. They radically changed the landscape of the French art scene by emphasising processes of production that focused on notions of authorship, the role of narrative structures, and the frame in which a work can be read.

Notions of time, as well as the idea of cinema as a frame within which to conceive artworks and exhibitions, lie at the heart of debates that echo in the work, *Stories are Propaganda* (2005). Parreno and Tiravanija conceived this work as the report of a journey they were making in China during the summer of 2005. They based the film on thoughts and memories that arose during the journey and determined its mood. This is 'a reading experience anyone can enjoy by turning the page of a magazine, hanging around or driving through a city' says the voice of the young English boy who narrates the film's script. The film is composed of a succession of static shots – a mysterious landscape, a snowman made of sand, a rabbit appearing out of a magician's box – that have no obvious connection with the voiceover, but that nonetheless provide a visually alluring backdrop to the boy's monologue. He is remembering a time that he didn't experience and commenting accurately on the good old days, 'before voicemail became the interlocutor in our lives'.

The installation of *Stories are Propaganda* creates the feeling of sitting in a cinema by employing the various elements of a traditional movie theatre: red carpeting, lights illuminating the space of the floor, velvet curtains. Parreno and Tiravanija further heighten the impact of this traditional viewing experience with an unexpected intervention. They have sprayed the title of the film in silver paint across the red velvet curtain which covers the screen.

The fundamental acts of speaking and remembering are recurrent concerns for both artists, who believe that a work of art can wholly exist when retold according to different memories, words and imaginations. For example, in Tiravanija's 2005 retrospective in Paris, he evoked all of his works through the spoken word. In Parreno's work, the frequent use of fluorescent ink, which has to be recharged with light in order to appear in the dark, emphasises the same subtle mechanisms. In *Stories are Propaganda*, the polyphonic character of memory is rendered obvious through the monologue of the young boy. The film engages with the multiplicity of images, events and memories that constitute our world.

Cat. AGAIN FOR TOMORROW
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¹ Philippe Parreno, 'McNamara, a Film by Liam Gillick', text first published in *Libération*, Cannes Festival, 27–28 May, 1995