

## INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION REVIEWS

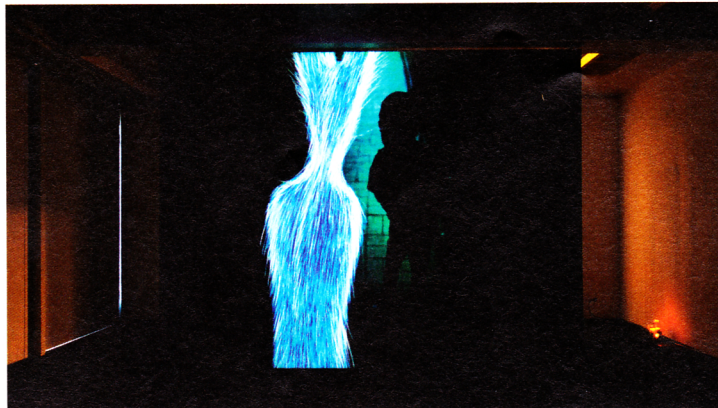
LONDON

### PHILIPPE PARRENO THE SERPENTINE

Philippe Parreno belongs to the 1990s "Relational Aesthetics" generation, which extended the role of the viewer to that of an active participant. On the evidence of this show, the original political charge of that gesture has become attenuated over the intervening decade, leaving an interactive form closer to that of a video game. When one of Parreno's four films at the Serpentine ended, the soundtrack for another was calling from a neighbor-

ing room. Simultaneously, motorized shutters opened to reveal fine white foam gusting down outside the windows, sprayed by a machine hidden on the roof, and absurdly mimicking snow. And yet Parreno insisted on presenting his cinematic thrills 'n' spills ride as a self-reflexive meditation on how an exhibition is constructed and perceived.

The films offered a cross section of Parreno's career. *No More Reality* (1991) might serve as a manifesto reflecting the parallel modes of social documentary and escapist fiction that have twined and separated throughout his work. Children demonstrate in a street, waving placards. Their rhythmic chant turns the wayward title into a pop slogan. There is, in fact, always something of MTV video production about Parreno's films. *InvisibleBoy* (2010) assumes the viewpoint of a young Chinese boy in nocturnal New York, imagining cartoonish ghouls. Their forms are etched into the film stock as animations, a sign for a breaching of the film's artifice, even as the rousing rock soundtrack shamelessly manipulates our emotions. Shown in the central gallery, *June 8, 1968* (2009) reconstructs the ceremonial transportation of the corpse of assassinated senator Robert Kennedy from New York to its burial in Washington, D.C. The viewer is engulfed by spatial illusion: a 30-foot-wide high-definition projection takes the viewpoint of a camera at the helm of a train moving at a stately pace through the U.S. landscape. Spectators stand motionless, paying homage to



Philippe Parreno: *InvisibleBoy*, 2010, film, approx. 6 minutes; at the Serpentine.

the cavalcade. Looking straight at us, they, like us, are arrested by Parreno's unfolding narrative. The piece's overt linearity neatly symbolizes the unfolding of filmic time.

*The Boy from Mars* (2003) renders this self-reflexivity more explicit. Parreno filmed an architect-designed power station within Rirkrit Tiravanija's collaborative ecological art project, *The Land*, in northern Thailand. A lone buffalo operates a pulley system that provides the power by which the film is made. With flashes of lightning, rising flares and the sound of night rain battering the structure's roof, the film is distinguished not by its ecological or self-reflexive implications but by sensational effects. Clusters of electrical adaptors, connected into little towers, with reddish night-lights at their extremities (*AC/DC Snakes*, 1995-2010), rose from the gallery's heating vents. The piece designated the gallery as a power source—stranded amid Kensington Gardens, like the power station out in the Thai landscape—but also resembled a movie theater's peripheral lighting. A materialistic caveat was placed on our entertainment, but only half-heartedly, as if Parreno no longer really believes in his own critique of cinematic seduction. Maybe he should consider going into Hollywood features. But of course, that's what Parreno and Douglas Gordon's famous *Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait* (2006) aspired to be, despite its strict methodology, its real-time conceit and its philosophical pretensions.

—Mark Prince