

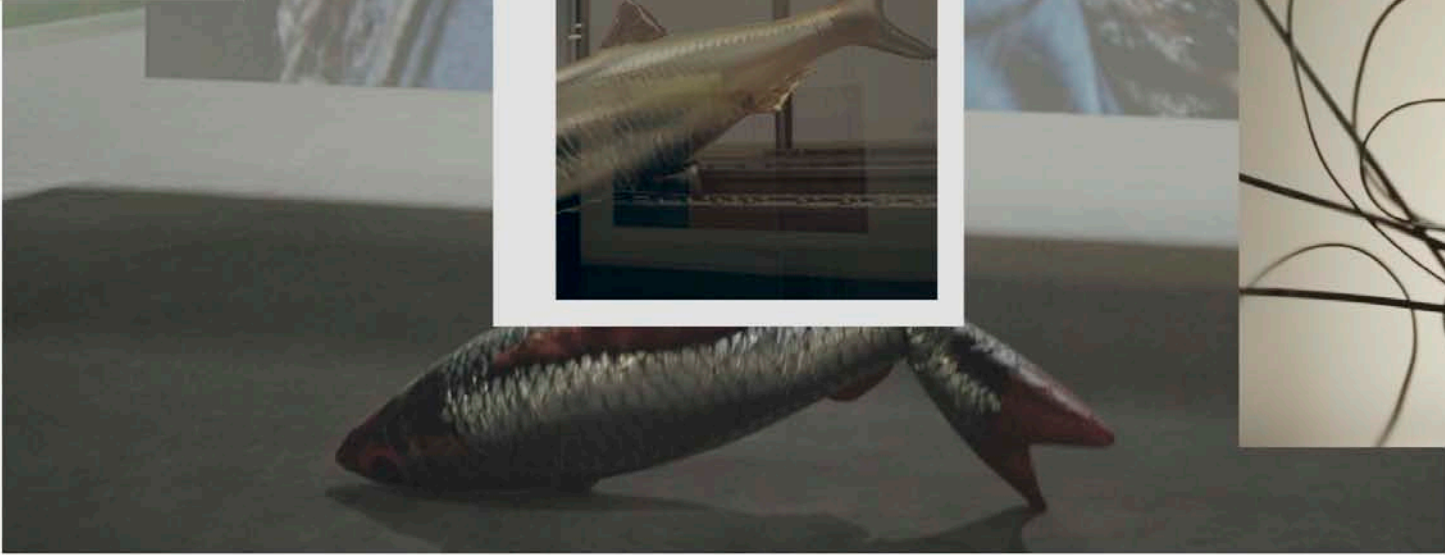
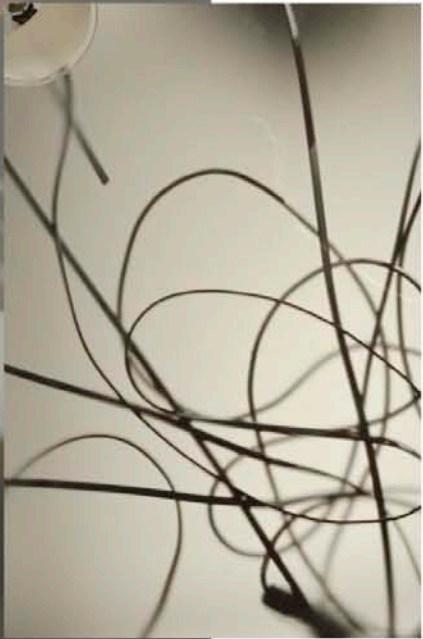
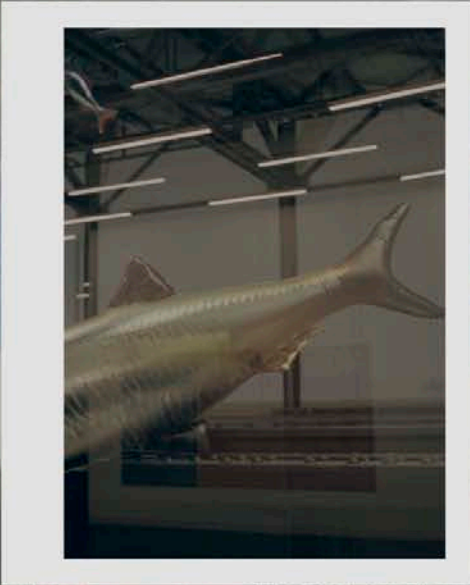
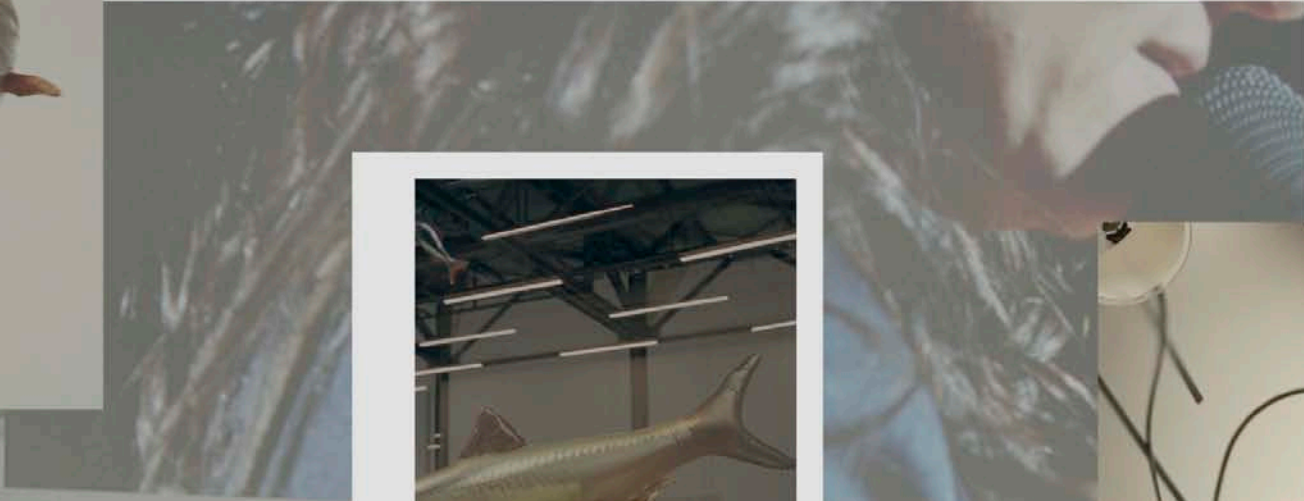
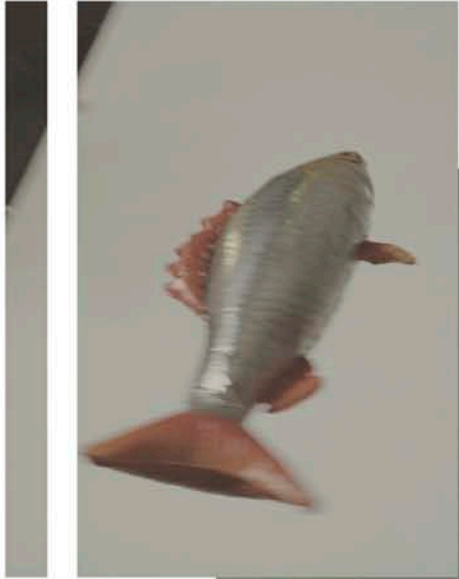
Things Are Constantly
Subjected to Adaptation
and Reinvention.

Philippe Parreno,
at Tate Modern's Turbine
Hall, Challenges Your
Perceptions of Time
and Space.

Interview by
MICHELE ROBECCHI



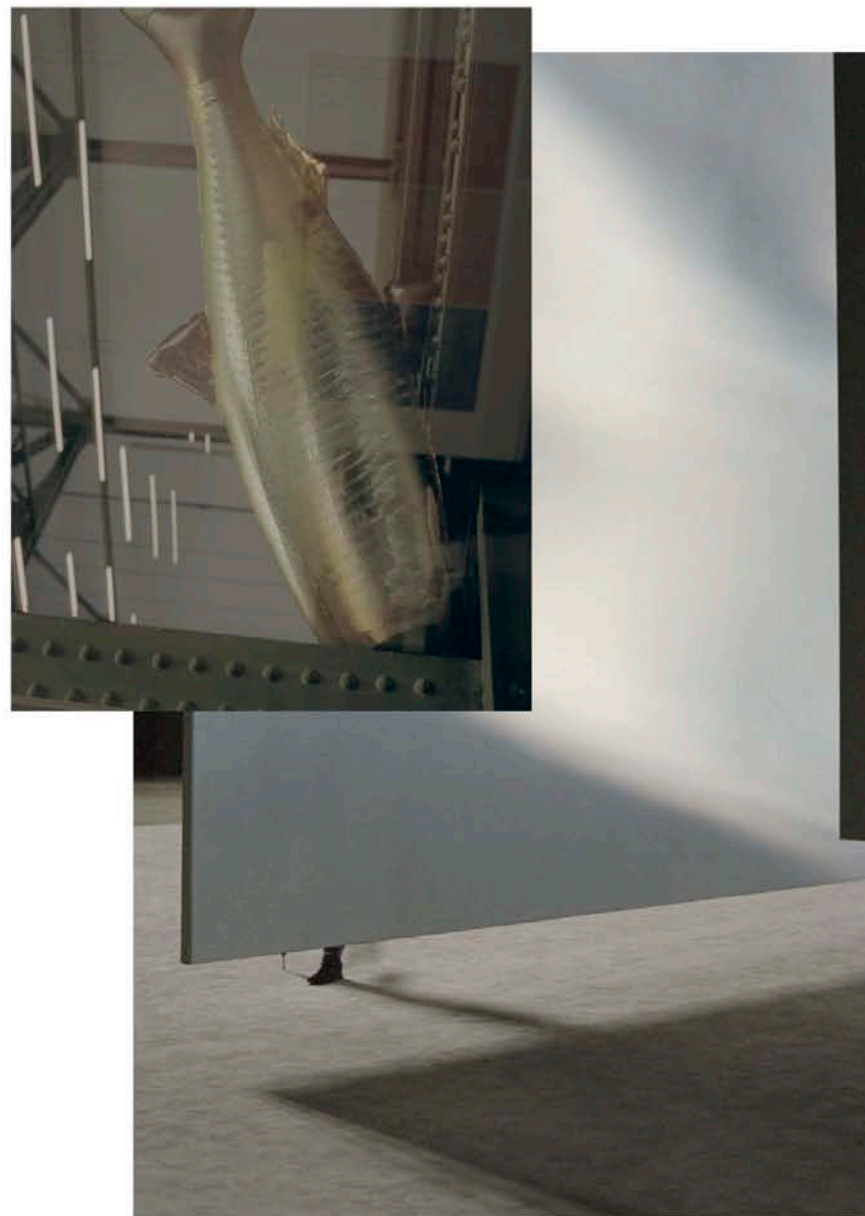
Photography by JUKKA OVASKAINEN



Michele Robecchi: The cuttlefish in Anywhen, your recent exhibition at Tate Modern, reminded me of your show Alien Seasons at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris in 2002, where a film about a cuttlefish was projected on Robert Rauschenberg's White Series Painting. What is the relationship between the two pieces? Δ Philippe Parreno: The seed for Anywhen was definitely planted when I did that show. My motivations at the time were mostly informed by philosophy — it was my interpretation of the theories of Jean-François Lyotard and Gilles Deleuze about time and space. Lyotard talks about "free-floating attention" as a way to qualify the unfocused attention the mind develops when it opens up towards something unknown. I was fascinated by these ideas and how events could change within an exhibition space and a specific timeline. There was also a collaboration with the scientist Jaron Lanier. He was interested in virtual reality, and when he came to Paris we spent some time together talking about how I was going to program the events. Eventually, we came up with a metaphor — each time something would happen in the space, a picture of a cuttlefish would be projected on the wall. So Anywhen is not that far off from Alien Seasons. I used Alien Seasons as a starting point to reflect on a series of exhibitions I did where I questioned the relationship with time and perception. Δ MR: Was Anywhere Out of the World at the Palais de Tokyo in 2013 part of the same discourse? Δ PP: Yes, although that exhibition had stronger ties with music. What I used to do before in order to generate

events was to adhere to a time code known as white noise. At the Palais de Tokyo I transformed the white noise into music. So I had the piano version of Igor Stravinsky's Petrushka performing some kind of managerial role — it would put everything into motion. I think that show was much more about the idea of providing a counterpoint, so that one thing would lead to another in a rhythmical way. Hypothesis at Hangar Bicocca [this year] was similar too in a way. There were even less objectual works, with the Marquees light sculptures, and the pianos activated by the sound of different composers. With Anywhen, I'm thinking about the work more like as an example of anamorphosis. The space constantly changes and in doing so it projects another space, whether it's a cinema or a sound room. Δ MR: So what you are saying is that the work is getting more immaterial, and that its boundaries with the space are progressively dissolving? Δ PP: I think what I'm saying is that if you analyse the work I've made in the arc of time between Alien Seasons and Anywhen, there seems to be an obsession with the idea of hanging. How do you hang in a space punctuated by a series of events? You're right — it used to happen mostly through the interaction with objects, whereas now they are more like quasi-objects. But if I use the word 'anamorphosis', it's because the same principles can be applicable to bi-dimensional objects like paintings. When you stand in front of a painting, it feels like you are engaged in a ritual of adoration. But then you notice some extra information leaking from that image that you

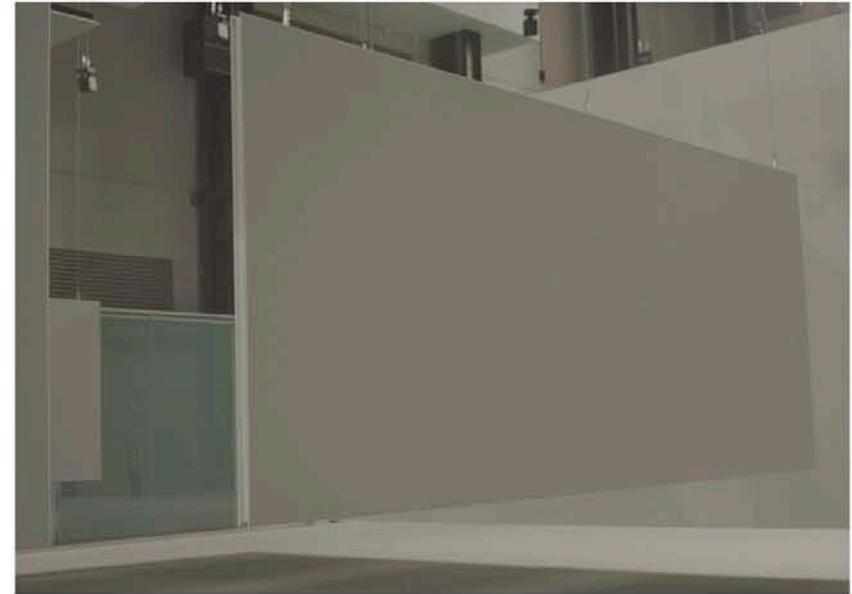
cannot quite comprehend from where you are, and that's when you start moving around to find a different perspective, only to realise that what you were looking at before kind of disappears, and something else shows up. Δ MR: There seems to be a peculiar contradiction in your work. It's very immersive and apparently unstructured, and yet it propagates a series of rules that the ruler has more or less to obey in order to experience it. Δ PP: I don't think the work is authoritarian. Any type of time-based experience you may have, like for example going to see a film or a theatre play, could be interpreted that way. What I'm trying to do is to make sure that the work creates a new form of collective experience. If you don't do anything in a space, just show art, people will only come in and out of it as individuals. That's the way it's been done most of the time so far: and it's good, but I also can't help thinking that it's the heritage of a very aristocratic way of looking at art. That's where the real authority lies — when you accept a position dictated by the society we live in as a given. To me the question is how to take this position and turn it into something else, and have a more collective experience without betraying the fundamental principles that govern the perception of art. Δ MR: What is the ultimate reason for your interest in the temporal aspect of the fruition of art and art as a generative form? Δ PP: I think there are a few different reasons. When I started making art, I was influenced by Pierre Boulez. In music, the idea of an open work is a lot more spread out. If you have a score and violinists — while in the process of playing — turn a



page, they make a decision on how to go on and at what pace, altering the music while it's being performed. Nothing is defined when you are playing an instrument. Things are constantly subjected to adaptation and reinvention. When you establish a relationship with an object, you are fundamentally playing it, even if you are not entirely conscious about it. If you see this within an exhibition context, you can say that the experience of the objects turns them into instruments. It's not like you change the meaning of the art, but if you see things along these terms, what you produce should accomplish the same effect of a piece of music being played live. Δ Another reason is technology. Today digital technologies have made the relationship with moving images a lot more fluid. You don't physically cut film frames anymore — you basically venture into a zone where images are floating on a screen and are very much alive. That's why whenever I show a film, I keep making changes over and over again. Δ MR: You are the first artist to make a project in the Turbine Hall with the new Tate extension in place. This means that the Hall is no longer a mere exhibition space, but an area of transit between one building and the other. This will affect the way the audience perceive the art in the hall, and it's interesting that a work like yours, which entertains a very elastic relationship with viewers and space, was chosen to inaugurate this. Δ PP: That's true. It's a public space and it's free. Another interesting thing is that the show crosses two seasons, so I have to think in cosmological terms as well. It is on for

six months, with temperature and natural light changing as it goes on. It's rare to have a show that lasts for so long. Δ I think the most interesting thing about Anywhen is that I'm still working on it even now that it's open. There is a general assumption that once you hang something on the wall, the job is done. In my case, that's the time when the show starts coming together. I'm going to go back at the end of October to add two more films and do other sound-based work. I also want to put forward the bioreactor idea, and produce some patterns to distribute into the lighting system. This is the most exciting part — I have an exhibition that I can start playing with. Maybe I will even change the name of the show as we go along. I'm also thinking of having special events every Saturday night because it's such a particular time of the week. It's an exhibition that constantly produces new forms. Δ MR: What about your proclivity for collaborating? Δ PP: It's another form of anamorphism, if you like. Or maybe it's like a polyphony, you know? In the 1970s and the 1980s collaborations used to generate all sort of questions about the issue of authorship. Who did what? That's why I started collaborating. I think absolute authorship is a dangerous concept. There is a significant difference between a signature and an autograph, but this a complicated issue to address. In a way it's still an open question. Δ MR: This seems to resonate with what you wrote in the preface of *Snow Dancing*, where you list a series of major events that defined the 1990s, concluding with *Toy Story*, and suggest that the absence of a camera in

the film and the immediate availability of all the toys in stores after the film came out made it the first Marxist movie. Δ PP: There was something cynical about *Toy Story*. I think what I meant was that the film was like a Marxist prophecy, with the industry producing a narrative ready for consumption without the need of having an author. It was like a closed system. Δ MR: Do you think something similar could happen to art? Δ PP: I don't think something similar could happen to art, although it's always good to be on alert and receptive to change.



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