

Manon De Pauw, *Intrigues*, Galerie de l'UQAM, Montreal, February 27 to March 28, 2009

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Manon De Pauw, *L'apprentie*, 2008, inkjet prints and light-boxes, set of 5 elements, 75 x 100 cm each

Manon De Pauw

Intrigues

Galerie de l'UQAM, Montreal
February 27 to March 28, 2009

Manon De Pauw practices a corporeal poetics as inventive and involute in its physical articulation as it is varied and inviting in its philosophical approach. Her manner of thinking the body – the “universal thing” – sheds light on the meaning of corporeality in the context of contemporary videographic and photographic work. The how and the why of it were demonstrably clear in this selection of works at UQAM, presented in an exhibition curated by Louise Déry. In sundry photograms, photographs, video performances, performance set-ups, single-channel videos, and multi-channel video installations, she sings the body eclectic.

In works such as *Répertoire* (2009; video-graphic installation with six projections in loop, table in wood and metal, Plexiglas, and mixed media), *L'apprentie* (2008; digital proof, inkjet print, and light box), *Là où je vis* (2008; video, colour, sound), and the stunning *Fantasmagorie lumineuse* (2008; video, colour, sound), De Pauw methodically explores body, image, and manifold textures of light. She is writing the self in the foreground of the virtual in the language of light and shadow. Her manipulations of the image are profoundly experimental and phenomenological in scope and tenor. She convinces us that the phenomenological is by no means an archaic language for work such as this, but a pressing and topical one. Her theatre of operations is at once spatial, temporal, and sensibly transcendent.

This work explores the private body – her body, that is – as existential integer and

ultimate reference pole. While she celebrates her own somatic experience and Schillerian body image in work that makes an exhilarating use of recent technology understood as existential technics, that work always reaches outside of itself, and achieves the implication of and dialogue with constituting alterity. This “becoming-other” as a result of “reaching toward” is at the heart of this work.

If all of the work in this exhibition registers a triumph of the tremulous private body as a radical thought experiment, the epiphany in the viewing lies in a phenomenal tactual dimension, a subliminal Braille that we read with fingertips wed to our retinas. Beyond that, it is almost as though she uses an anamorphic polyprism to free her viewers from any fealty to a Cartesian subject long since worn threadbare.

Clearly, she takes a cue from a phenomenology refracted through the prismatic

array of feminist thinkers such as Luce Irigaray and Catherine Vasseleu. For Irigaray, “Refigurings of the relation to the self are ‘read off’ the form of the female body or rather, the female body-morph. The body-morph can be thought of as a sort of discursive, *langue*-like substrate supporting the particular, *parole*-like discourse of female difference.”¹

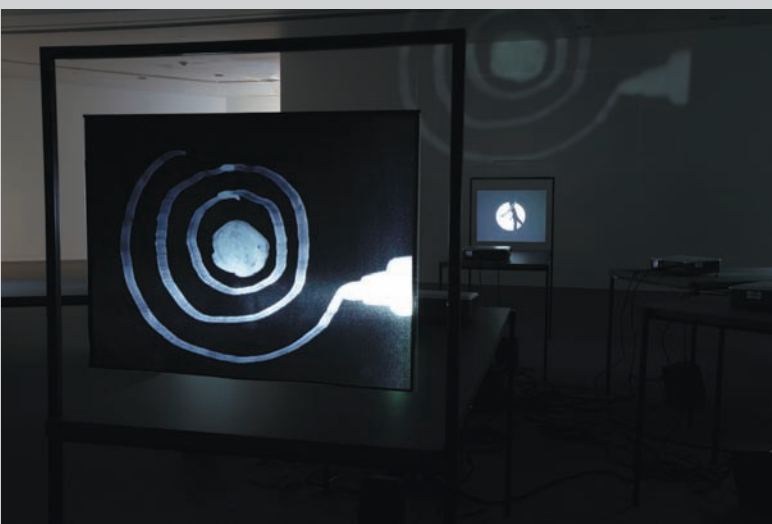
As far as the ubiquitous body-morph goes, one of the most significant works in the exhibition was *Replis et articulations* (2004). This remarkable video triptych presents a series of actions performed by the artist, choreographed on three screens, on a black platform serving as both canvas and corporeal arena. In performing, the body acts and is acted upon, and the innate rhythms rule our appreciation of the piece as a corporeal fantasia that is also a powerful metaphor for introspection and avowal and the intertwining of what is visible and invisible therein.

De Pauw is an on-stage illusionist, a savvy manipulator of media and image, working with the teaching and learning experience and the classroom as a laboratory for the incubation of vision freed from old ways of seeing and thinking. We see her drawing on large white sheets of paper, and what she delineates is perfectly in keeping with her intentions and her virtuosity: a Giotto-like circle. Her pedagogical slant dovetails with her phenomenological concerns. *Corps Pédagogique* (2001) is not only

an audiovisual take on the quintessential classroom environment but a subversive exploration of that environment with her own body as avatar to explode the myth of the neo-Cartesian subject.

Simultaneously crossing borders between the material and immaterial, the visible and invisible, de Pauw bends both to her will with admirable dexterity. The rhythm section in her work enjoys primacy. What I mean is that when we see her shifting her body fraction by fraction in centrifugal movements, we have a sense of the primacy of her rendering a world for herself within specific limits that speak not of closure but of porosity and openness and the primacy of the body as agent. When her body travels laterally, levitation-wise, across a school desk, it is the inexorable rhythm that compels us, it is the mantra of movement that commands us, and we are delivered onto the threshold of something like revelation as a result.

These rhythms are based not only on corporeal authenticity but on the symbolic cartography of the body implicit in phenomenological discourse. This symbolic mapping of the body in the context of where it finds itself in time and space makes for a rare epiphany in the assimilation of this work. As Merleau-Ponty wrote, “What counts for the orientation of the spectacle is not my body as it in fact is, as a thing in objective space, but as a system of possible actions, a virtual body with its



Manon De Pauw, *Répertoire*, 2009, video installation with six projections in loop, black and white, 3 mn 50 s, variable dimensions, photo : Patrick Mailloux

phenomenal ‘place’ defined by its task and situation of possibilities or corporeal projects that are made possible by this interaction.”² He also wrote, “To move one’s body is to aim at things through it; it is to allow oneself to respond to their call.”³ De Pauw moves the body toward and through situations that shed light on embodiment, the body-morph, and the reciprocal relation of self and Other.

1 See Dave Boothroyd, “The Touch of the Other on the Threshold of Sex; or The Skin between

Levinas and Irigaray,” in Michael Syrotinski and Ian Maclachlan (eds.), *Sensual Reading: New Approaches to Reading in its Relations to the Senses* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2001), pp. 49–50. 2 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, translated by Colin Smith (London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), p.250. 3 Ibid., p. 139.

James D. Campbell is a writer on art and independent curator based in Montreal. The author of over 100 books and catalogues on contemporary art and artists, he contributes frequently to visual arts publications across Canada.



Harun Farocki, *Immersion*, 2009, installation vidéo, double projection, coproduction Jeu de Paume, Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac Salzbourg, Paris.

HF | RG

Harun Faroki et Rodney Graham
Jeu de Paume, Paris
Du 7 avril au 7 juin 2009

Chantal Pontbriand, ancienne directrice de la regrettée publication *Parachute* et fondatrice du Festival international de nouvelle danse, investit les deux étages du Jeu de Paume pour une exposition conceptuelle au titre énigmatique, HF | RG, quatre initiales séparées par une barre

verticale. Elle y explore l’univers de deux plasticiens, Harun Farocki (HF) et Rodney Graham (RG). Gageons que cette exposition laissera une forte impression dans la mémoire des visiteurs. Loin de la débauche d’effets liée à la médiation, elle se resserre sur les thèmes centraux des deux artistes-cinéastes : l’archive, le montage, le non-verbal, auxquels très vite s’ajoutent le faire à l’œuvre, l’image, la machine, etc., autant d’œuvres pour détailler et examiner les champs sémantiques liés aux verbes filmer, enregistrer et regarder. L’exposition a

pour but d’appréhender le concept de dispositif, qu’il soit visuel ou moteur, et d’approcher l’Image ou les Images contemporaines sous toutes leurs formes : fixes (photographies), projetées (films, vidéos) et en installation.

Ce parcours à travers les œuvres de Farocki et de Graham s’effectue pas à pas, film après film, installation après installation. Au total, une quarantaine d’œuvres sont présentées. Tel un archéologue en action, Farocki, qui est considéré comme l’équivalent allemand de Jean-Luc Godard¹,

décortique l’histoire d’un motif dans *Sorties d’usines en onze décennies* (2006). Sur douze moniteurs, il extrait ses corps d’ouvriers ; au spectateur de se faire sa propre théorie. Chez Graham, l’obsession du motif transparaît dans son utilisation de la boucle qui lui permet de singer les codes du cinéma hollywoodien : dans *Vexation Island* (1997), puis dans *How I Became a Ramblin’ Man* (1999) et enfin dans *City Self/Country Self* (2000), films sans début ni fin, les actions incongrues se répètent en vain. Le pirate s’éveille et s’évanouit, le cow-boy chante, le citadin donnera un coup de pied au paysan, mais rien n’est si simple chez Graham, surtout quand il incarne lui-même les personnages. Farocki, lui, se dévoile dans un premier temps par la réflexion sur l’image et sur la pratique du montage. La preuve par l’image ? Dans *Nicht löschesbares Feuer* (1969), il éteint une cigarette sur son bras en expliquant l’amplitude de la brûlure par rapport à celle infligée par le napalm. Il ne glose pas, il fait surgir la pensée de l’image, de sa manipulation lors de la fabrication du film ou d’une remémoration. La pratique cinéphilique, celle du metteur en scène et du critique (une vitrine est entièrement consacrée à tous ses textes et à son travail éditorial au sein de la revue *Filmkritik*) se superposent², s’entrecroisent dans *Schnittstelle* (1995) ou *Der Ausdruck der Hände* (1997).