

THE USE OF FORMS

IF A VIEWER SAYS, "THE FILM I SAW WAS BAD," I SAY, "IT'S YOUR FAULT; WHAT DID YOU DO SO THAT THE DIALOGUE WOULD BE GOOD?" (JEAN-LUC GODARD)

THE EIGHTIES AND THE BIRTH OF DJ CULTURE: TOWARD A FORMAL COLLECTIVISM

Throughout the eighties, the democratization of computers and the appearance of sampling allowed for the emergence of a new cultural configuration, whose emblematic figures are the programmer and the DJ. The remixer has become more important than the instrumentalist, the rave more exciting than the concert. The supremacy of cultures of appropriation and the reprocessing of forms calls for an ethics: to paraphrase Philippe Thomas, artworks belong to everyone. Contemporary art tends to abolish the ownership of forms, or in any case to shake up the old jurisprudence. Are we heading toward a culture that would do away with copyright in favor of a policy allowing free access to works, a sort of blueprint for a communism of forms?

In 1956, Guy Debord published "Methods of Detournement." "The literary and artistic heritage of humanity should be used for partisan propaganda purposes. ... Any elements, no matter where they are taken from, can serve in making new combinations. ... Anything can be used. It goes without saying that one is not limited to correcting a work or to integrating diverse fragments of out-of-date works into a new one; one can also alter the meaning of these fragments in any appropriate way, leaving the imbeciles to their slavish preservation of 'citations.'"⁹¹

With the Lettrist International, then the Situationist International that followed in 1958, a new notion appeared: artistic *détournement*

01 GUY DEBORD, "METHODS OF DETOURNEMENT" IN *SITUATIONIST INTERNATIONAL ANTHOLOGY*, ED. AND TRANS. KEN KNABB (BERKELEY: BUREAU OF PUBLIC SECRETS, 1981), P. 9.

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(diversion),⁰² which might be described as a political use of Duchamp's reciprocal readymade (his example of this was "using a Rembrandt as an ironing board"). This reuse of preexisting artistic elements in a new whole was one of the tools that contributed to surpassing artistic activity based on the idea of "separate" art executed by specialized producers. The Situationist International applauded the *détournement* of existing works in the optic of impassioned everyday life, favoring the construction of lived situations over the fabrication of works that confirmed the division between actors and spectators of existence. For Guy Debord, Asger Jorn, and Gil Wolman, the primary artisans of the theory of *détournement*, cities, buildings, and works were to be considered parts of a backdrop or festive and playful tools. The Situationists extolled *la dérive* (or drift), a technique of navigating through various urban settings as if they were film sets. These situations, which had to be constructed, were experienced, ephemeral, and immaterial works, an art of the passing of time resistant to any fixed imitations. Their task was to eradicate, with tools borrowed from the modern lexicon, the mediocrity of an alienated everyday life in which the artwork served as a screen, or a consolation, representing nothing other than the materialization of a lack. As Anselm Jappe writes, "the Situationist criticism of the work of art is curiously reminiscent of the psychoanalytical account, according to which such productions are the sublimation of unfulfilled wishes."⁰³ The Situationist *détournement* was not one option in a catalog of artistic techniques, but the sole possible mode of using art, which represented nothing more than an obstacle to the completion of the avant-garde project. As Asger Jorn asserts in his essay "Peinture

02 IN *SOCIETY OF THE SPECTACLE*, DEBORD'S TRANSLATOR, DONALD NICHOLSON-SMITH, LEAVES *DÉTournement* IN FRENCH, OCCASIONALLY INTERCHANGING IT WITH "DIVERSION." *DÉTournement* CAN ALSO MEAN HIJACKING, EMBEZZLEMENT, AND CORRUPTION - TRANS.

03 ANSELM JAPPE, *GUY DEBORD*, TRANS. DONALD NICHOLSON-SMITH (BERKELEY: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS, 1999), P. 70.

détournée" (Diverted Painting, 1959), all the works of the past must be "reinvested" or disappear. There cannot, therefore, be a "Situationist art," but only a Situationist use of art, which involves its depreciation. The "Report on the Construction of Situations..." which Guy Debord published in 1957, encouraged the use of existing cultural forms by contesting any value proper to them. *Détournement*, as he would specify later in *Society of the Spectacle*, is "not a negation of style, but the style of negation."⁰⁴ Jorn defined it as "a game" made possible by "devalorization."

While the *détournement* of preexisting artworks is a currently employed tool, artists use it not to "devalorize" the work of art but to utilize it. In the same way that Surrealists used Dadaist techniques to a constructive end, art today manipulates Situationist methods without targeting the complete abolition of art. We should note that an artist such as Raymond Hains, a splendid practitioner of *la dérive* and instigator of an infinite network of interconnected signs, emerges as a precursor here. Artists today practice postproduction as a neutral, zero-sum process, whereas the Situationists aimed to corrupt the value of the diverted work, i.e., to attack cultural capital itself. As Michel de Certeau has suggested, production is a form of capital by which consumers carry out a set of procedures that makes them renters of culture.

While recent musical trends have made *détournement* banal, artworks are no longer perceived as obstacles but as building materials. Any DJ today bases his or her work on principles inherited from the history of the artistic avant-garde: *détournement*, reciprocal or assisted readymades, the dematerialization of activities, and so on.

According to Japanese musician Ken Ishii, "the history of techno music

04 GUY DEBORD, *SOCIETY OF THE SPECTACLE*, TRANS. DONALD NICHOLSON-SMITH (NEW YORK: ZONE BOOKS, 1994), P. 144.

resembles that of the Internet. Now everyone can compose musics endlessly, musics that are broken down more and more into different genres based on everyone's personality. The entire world will be filled with diverse, personal musics, which will inspire even more. I'm sure that new musics will be born from now on, unceasingly."⁰⁵ During a set, a DJ plays records, i.e., products. The DJ's work consists both of proposing a personal orbit through the musical universe (a playlist) and of connecting these elements in a certain order, paying attention to their sequence as well as to the construction of an atmosphere (working directly on the crowd of dancers or reacting to their movements). He or she may also act physically on the object being used, by scratching or using a whole range of actions (filters, adjusting the mixing levels, adding sounds, and so on). A DJ's set is not unlike an exhibition of objects that Duchamp would have described as "assisted readymades:" more or less modified products whose sequence produces a specific duration. One can recognize a DJ's style in the ability to inhabit an open network (the history of sound) and in the logic that organizes the links between the samples he or she plays. Deejaying implies a culture of the use of forms, which connects rap, techno, and all their subsequent by-products.

Clive Campbell, alias DJ Kool Herc, already practiced a primitive form of sampling in the seventies, the "breakbeat," which involved isolating a musical phrase and looping it by going back and forth between two turntables playing copies of the same vinyl record.

As DJ Mark the 45 King says: "I'm not stealing all their music, I'm using your drum track, I'm using this little 'bip' from him, I'm using your bassline that you don't even like no fucking more."⁰⁶

05 GUILLAUME BARA, *LA TECHNO* (PARIS: LIBRIO, 1999), P. 60.

DEEJAYING AND CONTEMPORARY ART: SIMILAR CONFIGURATIONS

When the *crossfader* of the mixing board is set in the middle, two samples are played simultaneously: Pierre Huyghe presents an interview with John Giorno and a film by Andy Warhol side by side. The *pitch control* allows one to control the speed of the record: *24 Hour Psycho* by Douglas Gordon. *Toasting, rapping, MCing*: Angela Bulloch dubs *Solaris* by Andrei Tarkovsky.

Cutting: Alex Bag records passages from a television program; Candice Breitz isolates short fragments of images and repeats them. *Playlists*: For their collaborative project *Cinéma Liberté Bar Lounge*, 1996, Douglas Gordon offered a selection of films censored upon their release, while Rirkrit Tiravanija constructed a festive setting for the programming.

In our daily lives, the gap that separates production and consumption narrows each day. We can produce a musical work without being able to play a single note of music by making use of existing records. More generally, the consumer customizes and adapts the products that he or she buys to his or her personality or needs. Using a remote control is also production, the timid production of alienated leisure time: with your finger on the button, you construct a program. Soon, Do-It-Yourself will reach every layer of cultural production: the musicians of Coldcut accompany their album *Let us play* (1997) with a CD-ROM that allows you to remix the record yourself.

The *ecstatic consumer* of the eighties is fading out in favor of an intelligent and potentially subversive consumer: the user of forms.

06 S.H. FERNANDO JR., *THE NEW BEATS: EXPLORING THE MUSIC, CULTURE AND ATTITUDES OF HIP-HOP* (NEW YORK: ANCHOR BOOKS/DOUBLEDAY, 1994), P. 246. THE FRENCH EDITION WAS PUBLISHED IN PARIS BY KARGO IN 2000.

DJ culture denies the binary opposition between the proposal of the *transmitter* and the participation of the *receiver* at the heart of many debates on modern art. The work of the DJ consists in conceiving linkages through which the works flow into each other, representing at once a product, a tool, and a medium. The producer is only a *transmitter* for the following producer, and each artist from now on evolves in a network of contiguous forms that dovetail endlessly. The product may serve to make work, the work may once again become an object: a rotation is established, determined by the use that one makes of forms.

As Angela Bulloch states, "when Donald Judd made furniture, he said something like: 'a chair is not a sculpture, because you can't see it when you're sitting on it.' So its functional value prevents it from being an art object, but I don't think that makes any sense."

The quality of a work depends on the trajectory it describes in the cultural landscape. It constructs a linkage between forms, signs, and images.

In the installation *Test Room Containing Multiple Stimuli Known to Elicit Curiosity and Manipulatory Responses*, 1999, Mike Kelley engages in a veritable archaeology of modernist culture, organizing a confluence of iconographic sources that are heterogeneous to say the least: Noguchi's sets for ballets by Martha Graham, scientific experiments on children's reaction to TV violence, Harlow's experiments on the love life of monkeys, performance, video, and Minimalist sculpture. Another of his works, *Framed & Frame (Miniature Reproduction "Chinatown Wishing Well" built by Mike Kelley after "Miniature Reproduction Seven Star Cavern" built by Prof. H. K. Lu)*, 1999, reconstructs and deconstructs the Chinatown Wishing Well in Los Angeles in two distinct installations, as if the popular votive sculpture and its touristic setting (a low wall surrounded by wire fencing) belonged

to "different categories."⁰⁷ Here again, the ensemble blends heterogeneous aesthetic universes: Chinese-American kitsch, Buddhist and Christian statuary, graffiti, tourist infrastructures, sculptures by Max Ernst, and abstract art. With *Framed & Frame*, Kelley strove "to render shapes generally used to signify the formless," to depict visual confusion, the amorphous state of the image, "the unfixed qualities of cultures in collision."⁰⁸ These clashes, which represent the everyday experience of city dwellers in the twenty-first century, also represent the subject of Kelley's work: global culture's chaotic melting pot, into which high and low culture, East and West, art and nonart, and an infinite number of iconic registers and modes of production are poured. The separation in two of the Chinatown Wishing Well, aside from obliging one to think of its frame as a "distinct visual entity,"⁰⁹ more generally indicates Kelley's major theme: *détourage*,¹⁰ which is to say, the way our culture operates by transplanting, grafting, and decontextualizing things. The frame is at once a marker – an index that points to what should be looked at – and a boundary that prevents the framed object from lapsing into instability and abstraction, i.e., the vertigo of *that which is not referenced*, wild, "untamed" culture. Meanings are first produced by a social framework. As the title of an essay by Kelley puts it, "meaning is confused spatially, framed."

High culture relies on an ideology of framing and the pedestal, on the exact delineation of the objects it promotes, enshrined in categories and regulated by codes of presentation. Low culture, conversely, develops in the exaltation of outer limits, bad taste, and transgression

07 MIKE KELLEY, "THE MEANING IS CONFUSED SPATIALLY, FRAMED" IN MIKE KELLEY, EXH. CAT. (GRENOBLE: LE MAGASIN, 1999), P. 62.

08 *IBID.*, P. 64.

09 *IBID.*

10 DÉTOURAGE IS THE PROCESS OF BLOCKING OUT THE BACKGROUND (OF A PROFILE, ETC.) IN PHOTOGRAPHY OR ENGRAVING – TRANS.

— which does not mean that it does not produce its own *framing system*. Kelley's work proceeds by short-circuiting these two focal points, the tight framing of museum culture mixed with the blur that surrounds pop culture. *Détourage*, the seminal gesture in Kelley's work, appears to be the major figure of contemporary culture as well: the embedding of popular iconography in the system of high art, the decontextualization of the mass-produced object, the displacement of works from the canon toward commonplace contexts. The art of the twentieth century is an art of *montage* (the succession of images) and *détourage* (the superimposition of images).

Kelley's "Garbage Drawings," 1988, for example, have their origin in the depiction of garbage in comic strips. One might compare them to Bertrand Lavier's "Walt Disney Productions" series, 1985, in which the paintings and sculptures that form the backdrop of a Mickey Mouse adventure in the Museum of Modern Art, published in 1947, become real works. Kelley writes: "Art must concern itself with the real, but it throws any notion of the real into question. It always turns the real into a facade, a representation, and a construction. But it also raises questions about the motives of that construction."¹¹ And these "motives" are expressed by mental frames, pedestals, and glass cases. By cutting out cultural or social forms (votive sculptures, cartoons, theater sets, drawings by abused children) and placing them in another context, Kelley uses forms as cognitive tools, freed from their original packaging.

John Armleder manipulates similarly heterogeneous sources: mass-produced objects, stylistic markers, works of art, furniture. He might pass for the prototype of the postmodern artist; above all, he was among the first to understand that the modern notion of the *new* needed to be replaced with a more useful notion as quickly as possible.

After all, he explains, the idea of newness was merely a stimulus. It seemed inconceivable to him "to go to the country, sit down in front of an oak tree and say: 'but I've already seen that!'"¹² The end of the modernist *telos* (the notions of progress and the *avant-garde*) opens a new space for thought: now what is at stake is to positize the remake, to articulate uses, to place forms in relation to each other, rather than to embark on the heroic quest for the forbidden and the sublime that characterized modernism. Armleder relates acquiring objects and arranging them in a certain way — the art of shopping and display — to the cinematic productions pejoratively referred to as B-movies. A B-movie is inscribed within an established genre (the western, the horror film, the thriller) of which it is a cheap by-product, while remaining free to introduce variants in this rigid framework, which both allows it to exist and limits it. For Armleder, modern art as a whole constitutes a bygone genre we can play with, the way Don Siegel, Jean-Pierre Melville, John Woo, or Quentin Tarantino take pleasure in abusing the conventions of film noir. Armleder's works testify to a shifted use of forms, based on a principle of mise-en-scène that favors the *tensions* between commonplace elements and more serious items: a kitchen chair is placed under an abstract, geometrical painting, spurts of paint in the style of Larry Poons run alongside an electric guitar. The austere and minimalist aspect of Armleder's works from the eighties reflect the clichés inherent in this B-movie modernism. "It might seem that I buy pieces of furniture for their formal virtues, and from a formalist perspective," Armleder explains. "You might say that the choice of an object has to do with an overall decision that is formalist, but this system favors decisions that are completely external to form: my final choice makes fun of the somewhat rigid system that I use to start with. If I am looking for a Bauhaus sofa of a certain length, I might end up bringing back

12 JOHN ARMLEDER IN CONVERSATION WITH NICOLAS BOURRIAUD AND ERIC TRONCY, DOCUMENTS SUR L'ART, NO. 6, FALL 1994.

a Louis XVI. My work undermines itself: all the theoretical reasons end up being negated or mocked by the execution of the work."¹³ In Armleder's work, the juxtaposition of abstract paintings and post-Bauhaus furniture transforms these objects into rhythmic elements, just as the "selector" in the early days of hip-hop mixed two records with the crossfader of the mixing board. "A painting by Bernard Buffet alone is not very good, but a painting by Bernard Buffet with a Jan Verduyssen becomes extraordinary."¹⁴ The early nineties saw Armleder's work lean toward a more open use of subculture. Disco balls, a well of tires, videos of B-movies – the work of art became the site of a permanent *scratching*. When Armleder placed Lynda Benglis's Plexiglas sculptures from the seventies against a background of Op-art wallpaper, he functioned as a remixer of realities.

Bertrand Lavier functions in a similar way when he superimposes a refrigerator onto an armchair (Brandt on Rue de Passy) or one perfume onto another (Chanel No. 5 on Shalimar), grafting objects in a playful questioning of the category of "sculpture." His *TV Painting*, 1986, shows seven paintings by Jean Fautrier, Charles Lapicque, Nicolas De Staël, Lewensberg, On Kawara, Yves Klein, and Lucio Fontana, each broadcast by a television set whose size corresponds to the format of the original work. In Lavier's work, categories, genres, and modes of representation are what generate forms and not the reverse. Photographic framing thus produces a sculpture, not a photograph. The idea of "painting a piano" results in a piano covered in a layer of expressionistic paint. The sight of a whitened store window generates an abstract painting. Like Armleder and Kelley, Lavier takes as material the established categories that delimit our perception of culture. Armleder considers them subgenres in the B-movie of modernism; Kelley deconstructs their figures and compares them with the practices

13 *IBID.*

14 *IBID.*

of popular culture; Lavier shows how artistic categories (painting, sculpture, photography), treated ironically as undeniable facts, produce the very forms that constitute their own subtle critique.

It might seem that these strategies of reactivation and the deejaying of visual forms represent a reaction to the overproduction or inflation of images. The world is saturated with objects, as Douglas Huebler said in the sixties, adding that he did not wish to produce more. While the chaotic proliferation of production led Conceptual artists to the dematerialization of the work of art, it leads postproduction artists toward strategies of mixing and combining products. Overproduction is no longer seen as a *problem*, but as a cultural ecosystem.

WHEN SCREENPLAYS BECOME FORM: A USER'S GUIDE TO THE WORLD

Postproduction artists invent new uses for works, including audio or visual forms of the past, within their own constructions. But they also reedit historical or ideological narratives, inserting the elements that compose them into alternative scenarios.

Human society is structured by narratives, immaterial scenarios, which are more or less claimed as such and are translated by lifestyles, relationships to work or leisure, institutions, and ideologies. Economic decision-makers project scenarios onto the world market. Political authorities devise plans and discourses for the future. We live within these narratives. Thus, the division of labor is the dominant employment scenario; the heterosexual married couple, the dominant sexual scenario; television and tourism, the favored leisure scenario. "We are all caught within the scenario play of late capitalism," writes Liam Gillick. "Some artists manipulate the techniques of 'prevision' so as to let the motivation show."¹⁵ For artists today contributing to the birth of a *culture of activity*, the forms that surround us are the materializations of these narratives. Folded and hidden away in all cultural products

as well as in our everyday surroundings, these narratives reproduce communal scenarios that are more or less implicit: a cell phone, an article of clothing, the credits of a television show, and a company logo all spur behaviors and promote collective values and visions of the world.

Gillick's works question the dividing line between fiction and fact by redistributing these two notions via the concept of the scenario. This is seen from a social point of view, as a set of discourses of forecasting and planning by which the socioeconomic universe and the imagination factories of Hollywood invent the present. "The production of scenarios is one of the key components in maintaining the level of mobility and reinvention required to provide the dynamic aura of so-called free-market economies."¹⁶

Postproduction artists use these forms to decode and produce different story lines and alternative narratives. Just as through psychoanalysis our unconscious tries, as best it can, to escape the presumed fatality of the familial narrative, art brings collective scenarios to consciousness and offers us other pathways through reality, with the help of forms themselves, which make these imposed narratives material.

By manipulating the shattered forms of the collective scenario, that is, by considering them not indisputable facts but precarious structures to be used as tools, these artists produce singular narrative spaces of which their work is the *mise-en-scène*. It is the use of the world that allows one to create new narratives, while its passive contemplation relegates human productions to the communal spectacle. There is not living creation, on the one hand, and the dead weight of the

16 LIAM GILLICK, "SHOULD THE FUTURE HELP THE PAST?" IN DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER, PIERRE HUYGHE, PHILIPPE PARRENO, P.17. REPRINTED IN *FIVE OR SIX* (NEW YORK: LUKAS & STERNBERG, 1999), P. 40.

history of forms, on the other: postproduction artists do not make a distinction between their work and that of others, or between their own gestures and those of viewers.

RIRKRIT TIRAVANIJA

In the works of Pierre Huyghe, Liam Gillick, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Jorge Pardo, and Philippe Parreno, the artwork represents the site of a negotiation between reality and fiction, narrative and commentary. The viewer of an exhibition by Rirkrit Tiravanija such as *Untitled (One Revolution Per Minute)*, 1996, will spend some time trying to distinguish the border between the artist's production and his or her own. A crepe stand, surrounded by a table filled with visitors, sits at the center of a labyrinth made of benches, catalogs, and tapestries; paintings and sculptures from the eighties accentuate the space. Where does the kitchen stop, and where does the art begin, when the work consists essentially of the consumption of a dish, and visitors are encouraged to carry out everyday gestures just as the artist is doing? This exhibition clearly manifests a will to invent new connections between artistic activity and a set of human activities by constructing a narrative space that captures quotidian tasks and structures in script form, as different from traditional art as the rave is from the rock concert.

The title of a work by Tiravanija is nearly always accompanied by the parenthetical mention of "lots of people." People are one of the components of the exhibition. Rather than being limited to viewing a set of objects offered for their appreciation, they are invited to mingle and to help themselves. The meaning of the exhibition is constituted by the use its "population" makes of it, just as a recipe takes on meaning when a tangible reality is formed: spaces meant for the performance of everyday functions (playing music, eating, resting, reading, talking) become artworks, objects. The visitor at an exhibition by Tiravanija is thus faced with the process that constitutes the meaning

of his or her own life, through a parallel (and similar) process that constitutes the meaning of the work. Like a movie director, Tiravanija is by turns active and passive, urging actors to adopt a specific attitude, then letting them improvise; helping out in the kitchen before leaving behind a simple recipe or leftovers. He produces modes of sociality that are partially unforeseeable, a *relational aesthetic* whose primary characteristic is mobility. His work is made of temporary campsites, bivouacs, workshops, encounters, and trajectories: the true subject of Tiravanija's work is nomadism, and it is through the problematics of travel that one can clearly envision his formal universe. In Madrid, he filmed the trip between the airport and the Reina Sofia Center where he was participating in an exhibition (*Untitled, para Cuellos de Jarama to Torrejon de ardoz to Coslada to Reina Sofia*, 1994). For the Lyon Biennial, he presented the car that brought him to the museum (*Bon Voyage, Monsieur Ackermann*, 1995). *On the road with Jiew, Jeb, Sri and Moo*, 1998, consisted of a cross-country road trip from Los Angeles to Philadelphia, the exhibition site, with five students from Chiang Mai University. This long drive was documented with video, photographs, and a travel diary on the Internet; it was presented at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and resulted in a catalog on CD-ROM. Tiravanija also reconstructs the architectural structures he has visited, the way an immigrant might take stock of the places he has left behind: his apartment on the Lower East Side rebuilt in Cologne, one of the eight studios at Context Studio in New York rebuilt at the Whitney Museum of Art ("Rehearsal Studio No. 6"), the Gavin Brown gallery transformed into a rehearsal space in Amsterdam. His work shows us a world made up of hotel rooms, restaurants, stores, cafes, workplaces, meeting places and encampments (the tent of *Cinéma de ville*, 1998). The types of spaces Tiravanija proposes are those that shape the everyday life of the uprooted traveler: they are all public spaces, with the exception of his own apartment, whose form accompanies him abroad like a phantom from his past life.

Tiravanija's art always has something to do with giving, or with the opening of a space. He offers us the forms of his past and his tools and transforms the places where he is exhibiting into places accessible to all, as during his first New York show (in 1993), for which he invited the homeless to come in and eat soup. This immediate generosity might be likened to the Thai culture in which Buddhist monks do not work but are encouraged to accept people's gifts.

Precariousness is at the center of a formal universe in which nothing is durable, everything is movement: the trajectory between two places is favored in relation to the place itself, and encounters are more important than the individuals who compose them. Musicians at a jam session, customers at a cafe or restaurant, children at a school, audience members at a puppet show, guests at a dinner: these temporary communities are organized and materialized in structures that are so many human attractors. By bringing together notions of community and ephemerality, Tiravanija counters the idea that an identity is indissoluble or permanent: our ethnicity, our national culture, our personality itself are just baggage that we carry around. The nomads that Tiravanija's work describes are allergic to national, sexual, and tribal classifications. Citizens of international public space, they traverse these spaces for a set amount of time before adopting new identities; they are universally *exotic*. They make the acquaintance of people of all sorts, the way one might hook up with strangers during a long trip. That is why one of the formal models of Tiravanija's work is the airport, a transitional place in which individuals go from boutique to boutique and from information desk to information desk and join the temporary micro-communities that gather while waiting to reach a destination. Tiravanija's works are the accessories and decor of a planetary scenario, a script in progress whose subject is how to inhabit the world without residing anywhere.

PIERRE HUYGHE

While Tiravanija offers us models of possible narratives whose forms blend art and everyday life, Pierre Huyghe organizes his work as a critique of the narrative models offered us by society. Sitcoms, for example, provide a mass audience with imaginary contexts with which it can identify. The scripts are written based on what is called a *bible*, a document that specifies the general nature of the action and the characters, and the framework in which these must evolve. The world that Huyghe describes is based on constraining narrative structures, whose "soft" version is the sitcom; the function of artistic practice is to make these structures function in order to reveal their coercive logic and then to make them available to an audience likely to reappropriate them. This vision of the world is not far removed from Michel Foucault's theory of the organization of power: from top to bottom of the social scale, a "micropolitics" reflects ideological fictions that prescribe ways of living and tacitly organize a system of domination. In 1996, Huyghe offered fragments of screenplays by Stanley Kubrick, Jacques Tati, and Jean-Luc Godard to participants in his casting sessions (*Multiple Scenarios*). An individual reading the screenplay for *2001: A Space Odyssey* on a stage only amplifies a process that traverses the entirety of our social life: we recite a text written *elsewhere*. And this text is called an ideology. The challenge, then, is to learn to become the critical interpreter of this ideological scenario, by playing with other scenarios and by constructing situation comedies that will eventually be superimposed on the narratives imposed on us. Huyghe's work aims to bring to light these implicit scenarios and to invent others that would make us freer: citizens would gain autonomy and freedom if they could participate in the construction of the "bible" of the social sitcom instead of deciphering its lines.

By photographing construction workers on the job, then exhibiting this image on an urban billboard overlooking the construction site for

the duration of the project (*Chantier Barbès-Rochechouart*, 1994), Huyghe offers an image of labor in real time: the activity of a group of workers on a construction site is seldom documented, and the representation here doubles or dubs it the way live commentary would. In Huyghe's work, delayed representation is the primary site of social falsification: the issue is not only to restore speech to individuals but also to show the invisible work of dubbing while it is being done. *Dubbing*, 1996, a video in which actors dub a film in French, plainly illuminates this general process of dispossession: the grain of the voice represents and manifests the singularity of speech that the imperatives of globalized communication force one to eradicate. It is the subtitle versus the original version, the global standardization of codes. This ambition in some ways recalls Godard of the militant years, when he planned to reshoot *Love Story* and distribute cameras to factory workers in order to thwart the bourgeois image of the world, this falsified image that the bourgeoisie calls a "reflection of the real." "Sometimes," Godard writes, "the class struggle is the struggle of one image against another image and one sound against another sound."¹⁷ In this spirit, Huyghe produced a film (*Blanche Neige Lucie*, 1997) about Lucie Dolène, a French singer whose voice was used by the Disney studios for the dubbed version of *Snow White*, in which Lucie tries to obtain the rights to her voice. A similar process governs the artist's version of Sidney Lumet's 1975 film *Dog Day Afternoon*, in which the protagonist of the original bank robbery (to which Lumet bought the rights) finally has the opportunity to play his own role, one that was confiscated by Al Pacino: in both cases, individuals reappropriate their story and their work, and reality takes revenge on fiction. All of Huyghe's work, for that matter, resides in this interstice that separates reality from fiction and is sustained by its activism in favor of a democracy of social sound tracks: dubbing versus redubbing.

17 JEAN-LUC GODARD, *GODARD PAR GODARD, DES ANNÉES MAC AUX ANNÉES 80* (PARIS: FLAMMARION, 1991).

Fiction's swing toward reality creates gaps in the spectacle. "The question is raised of whether the actors might not have become interpreters," says Huyghe, regarding his billboards of workers or passers-by exhibited in urban space. We must stop interpreting the world, stop playing walk-on parts in a script written by power. We must become its actors or co-writers. The same goes for works of art: when Huyghe reshoots a film by Alfred Hitchcock or Pier Paolo Pasolini shot by shot or juxtaposes a film by Warhol with a recorded interview with John Giorno, it means that he considers himself responsible for their work, that he restores their dimension as scores to be replayed, tools allowing the comprehension of the current world. Pardo expresses a similar idea when he states that many things are more interesting than his work, but that his works are "a model for looking at things." Huyghe and Pardo restore works of the past to the world of activity. Through pirate television (*Mobile TV*, 1995-98), casting sessions, or the creation of the *Association des Temps libérés* (Association of Freed Time), Huyghe fabricates structures that break the chain of interpretation in favor of forms of activity: within these setups, exchange itself becomes the site of use, and the script-form becomes a possibility of redefining the division between leisure and work that the collective scenario upholds. Huyghe works as a *monteur*, or film editor. And *montage*, writes Godard, is a "fundamental political notion. An image is never alone, it only exists on a background (ideology) or in relation to those that precede or follow it."¹⁸ By producing images that are *lacking* in our comprehension of the real, Huyghe carries out political work: contrary to the received idea, we are not saturated with images, but subjected to the lack of certain images, which must be produced to fill in the blanks of the official image of the community.

Fenêtre sur cour (Rear Window), 1995, is a video shot in a Parisian apartment building that repeats the action and dialogue of Hitchcock's

film shot by shot, reinterpreted in its entirety by young French actors and set in a Parisian housing project. The "remake" affirms the idea of a production of models that can be replayed endlessly, a synopsis available for everyday activity.

The unfinished houses that serve as sets for *Incivilis*, 1995, a "remake" of Pasolini's *Uccellacci e uccellini*, represent "a provisional state, a suspended time," since these buildings have been left unfinished in order for their owners to avoid Italian tax laws. In 1996, Huyghe offered visitors of the exhibition *Traffic* a bus ride toward the docks of Bordeaux. Throughout their nighttime trip, travelers could view a video that showed the image of the route they were following, shot in the daytime. This shift between night and day, as well as the slight delay due to red lights and traffic, introduced an uncertainty concerning the reality of the experience: the superimposition of real time and the *mise-en-scène* produced a potential narrative. While the image becomes a tenuous link that connects us to reality, a splintered guide to the lived experience, the meaning of the work has to do with a system of differences: the difference between the direct and the deferred, between a piece by Gordon Matta-Clark or a film by Warhol and the projection of these works by Huyghe, between three versions of the same film (*L'Atlantique*), between the image of work and the reality of this work (*Barbès-Rochechouart*), between the meaning of a sentence and its translation (*Dubbing*), between a lived moment and its scripted version (*Dog Day Afternoon*). It is in difference that human experience occurs. Art is the product of a gap.

By refilming a movie shot by shot, we represent something other than what was dealt with in the original work. We show the time that has passed, but above all we manifest a capacity to evolve among signs, to inhabit them. Reshooting Hitchcock's classic *Rear Window* in a Parisian housing project with unknown actors, Huyghe exposes a skeleton of action rid of its Hollywood aura, thereby asserting a conception

of art as the production of models that may be endlessly repeated, scenarios for everyday action. Why not use a fiction film to look at construction workers erecting a building just outside our window? And why not bring together the words of Pasolini's *Uccellacci e uccellini* and a few unfinished buildings in a contemporary Italian suburb? Why not use art to look at the world, rather than stare sullenly at the forms it presents?

DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER

Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster's "Chambres" series, home movies and impressionist environments, sometimes strike the critic as too intimate or too atmospheric. Yet she explores the domestic sphere by placing it in relation with the most burning social questions; the fact is that she works on the *grain* of the image more than on its composition. Her installations set in motion atmospheres, climates, inexpressible sensations of art, through a catalog of often blurry or unframed images – images in the midst of being focused. In front of a piece by Gonzalez-Foerster, it is the viewer's task to blend the whole sensorially, the way a viewer's eye must optically blend the pointillist stippings of a Seurat. With her short film *Riyo*, 1998, it is even up to the viewer to imagine the features of the protagonists, whose faces are never presented to us, and whose phone conversation follows the course of a boat ride on a river across Kyoto. The facades of buildings filmed in a continuous shot provide the framework of the action; as in all of her work, the sphere of intimacy is literally projected onto common objects and rooms, souvenir images, and floor plans of houses. She is not content to show the contemporary individual grappling with his or her private obsessions, but instead reveals the complex structures of the mental cinema through which this individual gives shape to his or her experience: what the artist calls *autonomie*, which starts with an observation on the evolution of our ways of living.

"The technologization of our interiors," Gonzalez-Foerster writes, "transforms our relationship to sounds and images,"¹⁹ and turns the individual into a sort of editing table or mixing board, the programmer of a home movie, the inhabitant of a permanent film set. Here again, we are faced with a problematic that compares the world of work and that of technology, considered a source of the re-enchantment of the everyday and a mode of production of the self. Her work is a landscape in which machines have become objects that can be appropriated, domesticated. Gonzalez-Foerster shows the end of technology as an apparatus of the state, its pulverization in everyday life via such forms as computer diaries, radio alarm clocks, and digital cameras used as pens. For Gonzalez-Foerster, domestic space represents not a site of withdrawal into the self but a site of confrontation between social scripts and private desires, between received images and projected images. It is a space of projection. All domestic interiors function on the basis of a narrative of the self; they make up a scripted version of everyday life as well as an analysis: recreating the apartment of filmmaker Rainer Werner Fassbinder (*RWF*, 1993), rooms that have been lived in, seventies decor, or a walk through a park. Gonzalez-Foerster uses psychoanalysis in numerous projects as a technique that allows the emergence of a new scenario: faced with a blocked personal reality, the analyst works to reconstruct the narrative of his or her life on the unconscious level, allowing the mastery of images, behaviors, and forms that, until then, have eluded him or her. The artist asks the visitor of the exhibition to trace the floor plan of the house he or she inhabited as a child, or asks the gallerist Esther Schipper to entrust her with childhood objects and memories. The primary locus of experience for Gonzalez-Foerster is the bedroom: reduced to an affective skeleton (a few objects, colors), she materializes the act of memory – both emotional and aesthetic

19 DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER, "TROPICALITY" IN DOMINIQUE GONZALEZ-FOERSTER, PIERRE HUYGHE, PHILIPPE PARRENO, P. 122.

memory, referencing Minimalist art in her aesthetic organization.

Her universe composed of affective objects and colored floor plans is similar to the experimental films and home movies of Jonas Mekas: Gonzalez-Foerster's work, which is striking in its homogeneity, seems to constitute a film of domestic forms on which images are projected. She presents structures where memories, places, and everyday facts are inscribed. This mental film is the object of more elaborate treatment than the narrative structure, itself sufficiently open to accommodate the viewer's lived experience, indeed, to provoke his or her own memory, as in a psychoanalytical session. Should we, in the presence of her work, practice the *floating gaze*, analogous to the *floating listening* through which analysts facilitate the flow of memories? Gonzalez-Foerster's works are characterized by this vagueness – at once intimate and impersonal, austere and free – that blurs the contours of all narratives of everyday life.

LIAM GILLICK

Liam Gillick's work presents itself as an ensemble of layers (archives, stage sets, posters, billboards, books) from which he produces pieces that might make up the set of a film or the materialization of a script. In other words, the narrative that constitutes his work circulates around and through the objects he exhibits, without these objects being merely illustrative. Each work functions as a folded scenario that contains indexes from areas of parallel knowledge (art, industry, urbanism, politics, and so on). Through individuals who played a major role in history while remaining in the shadows (Ibuka, the former vice chairman of Sony; Erasmus Darwin, the libertarian brother of the evolutionist; Robert McNamara, secretary of defense during the Vietnam War), Gillick fabricates tools of exploration that target the intelligibility of our era. A part of his work aims to destroy the border between the narrative arrangements of fiction and those of historical interpretation, to establish new connections between documentary and fiction.

A sense of the artwork as analytical of scenarios allows him to substitute the historian's empirical succession ("this is what happened") with narratives that propose alternative possibilities of thinking about the current world, usable scenarios and courses of action. The real, to really be thought, must be inserted into fictional narratives; the work of art, which inserts social facts into the fiction of a coherent world, must in turn generate potential uses of this world, a mental logistics that favors change. Like the exhibitions of Tiravanija, those of Gillick imply the participation of the audience: his work is composed of negotiation tables, discussion platforms, empty stages, bulletin boards, drawing tables, screens, and information rooms – collective, open structures. "I try to encourage people," he writes, "to accept that the work of art presented in a gallery is not the resolution of ideas and objects." By maintaining the myth of the artwork as a problem resolved, we annihilate the action of the individual or groups on history. If the forms Gillick exhibits closely resemble the decor of everyday alienation (logos, elements from bureaucratic archives or offices, conference rooms, specific spaces of economic abstraction), their titles and the narratives they refer to evoke decisions to be made, uncertainties, possible engagements. The forms he produces always seem suspended; there is an ambiguity to how "finished" or "unfinished" they are. For his exhibition *Erasmus is late* in Berlin, 1996, each wall in the Schipper & Krome gallery was painted a different color, but the layer of paint stopped midway, the brushstrokes obvious. Nothing is more violently foreign to the industrial world than incompleteness, than quickly assembled tables or abandoned paint jobs. A manufactured object cannot be incomplete in this way. The "incomplete" status of Gillick's works raises the question: at what point in the development of the industrial process did mechanization destroy the last traces of human intervention? What role does modern art play in this process? Modes of mass production destroy the object as scenario in order to assert its foreseeable, controllable, routine character. We must reintroduce the unforeseeable, the uncertainty, *play*:

thus certain of Gillick's pieces may be produced by others, in the functionalist tradition inaugurated by László Moholy-Nagy. *Inside now, we walked into a room with Coca-Cola painted walls*, 1998, is a wall drawing that must be painted by several assistants, according to precise rules: the object is to approximate the color of the famous soda, brushed by brushstroke; the soda's mode of production follows exactly the same process, since it is produced by local factories based on the formula provided by the Coca-Cola Company. For an exhibition he curated at Gio Marconi Gallery in 1992, Gillick asked sixteen English artists to send him instructions so that he could produce their pieces himself on site.

The materials Gillick uses are derived from corporate architecture: Plexiglas, steel, cables, treated wood, and colored aluminum. By connecting the aesthetic of Minimalist art with the muted design of multinational corporations, the artist draws a parallel between universalistic modernism and Reaganomics, the project of emancipation of the avant-garde and the protocol of our alienation in a modern economy. Parallel structures: Tony Smith's *Black Box* becomes Gillick's "projected think tank." The documentation tables found in Conceptual art exhibitions organized by Seth Siegelaub are used here to read fiction; Minimalist sculpture is transformed into an element of role playing. The modernist grid issued from the utopia of Bauhaus and Constructivism is confronted with its political reprocessing, i.e., the set of motifs by which economic power has established its domination. Weren't Bauhaus students the ones who conceived of the "Atlantic Wall" bunkers during World War II? This archaeology of modernism is particularly visible in a series of pieces produced on the basis of Gillick's book *Discussion Island Big Conference Center* (1997), fiction that presents a "think tank on think tanks." Indexing Donald Judd's formal vocabulary and installed on the ceiling, these pieces bear titles that refer to functions carried out in a corporate context: *Discussion Island Resignation Platform*, *Conference Screen*, *Dialogue Platform*,

Moderation Platform, and so on. The phenomenology dear to Minimalist artists becomes a monstrous bureaucratic behaviorism, Gestalt an advertising procedure. Gillick's works, like those of Carl Andre, represent zones more than sculptures: here, one is meant to resign, discuss, project images, speak, legislate, negotiate, take advice, direct, prepare something, and so on. But these forms, which project possible scenarios, imply the creation of new scenarios.

MAURIZIO CATTELAN

In *Untitled*, 1993, the canvas is lacerated three times in the shape of a Z, an allusion to the Z of Zorro in the style of Lucio Fontana. In this apparently very simple work, at once minimalist and immediately accessible, we find all the figures that compose Cattelan's work: the exaggerated *détournement* of works of the past, the moralist fable, and, above all, the insolent way of breaking into the value system, which remains the primary feature of his style and which involves taking forms literally. While the laceration of a canvas for Fontana is a symbolic and transgressive act, Cattelan shows us this act in its most current acceptance, the use of a weapon, and as the gesture of a comic villain. Fontana's vertical gesture opened onto the infiniteness of space, onto the modernist optimism that imagined a place beyond the canvas, the sublime within reach. Its reprise (in zigzags) by Cattelan mocks the Fontana by indexing the work to a Walt Disney television series about Zorro, quasi-contemporary to it. The zigzag is the most frequently used movement in Cattelan's work: it is comic and Chaplinesque in its essence, and it corresponds to errancy, or waywardness. The artist as slalom racer may be tricky, his uncertain bearing may be laughable, but he encircles the forms he brushes up against while dispatching them to their status as accessory and decor. *Untitled* is certainly a programmatic work, from the viewpoint of form as well as method: the zigzag is Cattelan's sign. If we consider the artist's numerous "remakes" of other artists' works, we notice that the method is always identical: the formal structure

seems familiar, but layers of meaning appear almost insidiously, radically overturning our perception. Cattelan's forms always show us familiar elements dubbed, in voice-over, by cruel or sarcastic anecdotes. In *Mon Oncle* by Jacques Tati, a man sees a concierge pluck a chicken. He then imitates the cackling of the animal, making the poor woman jump as she is persuaded that it has come back to life. Many of Cattelan's works produce an analogous effect, when he creates "sound tracks" for works – Zorro's song for a Fontana, the Red Brigade for a work that evokes Robert Smithson or Jannis Kounellis, tomblike reflection before a hole in the style of the earthworks of the sixties. When he installed a live donkey in a New York gallery beneath a crystal chandelier in 1993, Cattelan indirectly alluded to the twelve horses that Kounellis exhibited at the Attico gallery in Rome in 1969. But the title of the work (*Warning! Enter at your own risk. Do not touch, do not feed, no smoking, no photographs, no dogs, thank you*) radically reverses the work's meaning, ridding it of its historicity and its vitalist symbolism to turn it toward the system of representation in the most spectacular sense of the term: what we are seeing is a burlesque spectacle under high surveillance whose outer limits are purely legal. The live animal is presented not as beautiful, or as new, but as both dangerous for the public and incredibly problematic for the gallerist. The reference to Kounellis is not gratuitous, as it seems clear that Arte Povera represents the principal formal matrix of Cattelan's work, with regard to the composition of his images and the spatial arrangement of readymade elements. The fact is that he rarely uses mass-produced objects, or technology. His formal register is composed of more natural elements (Jannis Kounellis, Giuseppe Penone) or anthropomorphic ones (Giulio Paolini, Alighiero Boetti). It is not a matter of influences, much less an homage to Arte Povera, but a sort of linguistic "hard drive" that is quite discrete and that reflects Cattelan's Italian visual education.

In 1968, Pier Paolo Caizolari exhibited *Untitled (Malina)*, an installation in which he presented an albino dog attached to the wall by a leash in an environment that featured a pile of earth and blocks of ice. One might think again of Cattelan's menagerie of horses, donkeys, dogs, ostriches, pigeons, and squirrels – except that his animals do not symbolize anything or refer to any transcendent value, but merely embody types, personages, or situations. The symbolic universe developed by Arte Povera or Joseph Beuys disintegrates in Cattelan's work under the pressure of a troublemaker who constantly compares forms and their contradictions and violently refuses any positive value.

This way of turning modernist forms against the ideologies that saw them emerge – the modern ideologies of emancipation, of the sublime – as well as against the art world and its beliefs, testifies more to Cattelan's caricatured ferocity than to a so-called cynicism. Some of his exhibitions might at first glance evoke a Michael Asher or Jon Knight, insofar as they reveal the economic and social structures of the art system by centering on the gallerist or the exhibition space. But very quickly, the conceptual reference gives way to another, more diffuse impression, that of a real personalization of criticism, which refers to the form of the fable as well as to a real will for nuisance. In 1993, Cattelan produced a piece that occupied the entire Massimo de Carlo gallery in Milan; it could only be viewed from the window. After explaining his idea in an interview, the artist concluded by admitting: "I also wanted to see Massimo de Carlo outside the gallery for a month." A troublemaker, the eternal bad student skulking at the back of the classroom. We have the impression that Cattelan considers his formal repertoire as piles of homework to be completed, a set of imposed figures, a sort of detention which the artist/dunce takes pleasure in turning into a joke. One of his earliest significant pieces, *Edizioni dell'obbligo*, 1991, was composed of schoolbooks whose covers and titles had been modified by children, a sort of

scornful revenge against any agenda. As for the draperies and fabrics of Arte Povera and the Anti-form of the sixties, they were used to escape from the Castello di Rivara, where he was participating in his first important group show in 1992: "I enjoyed watching what the other artists were doing, how they reacted to the situation. That work was not only metaphorical, it was also a tool. The night before the opening, I let myself down from the window and I ran away." The work presented was nothing other than a makeshift ladder made of knotted sheets, hanging on the facade of the exhibition site. Following the same principle, during Manifesta II in Luxembourg in 1998, Cattelan exhibited an olive tree planted on an enormous diamond of earth. A hurried observer might have thought it a remake of Beuys or Penone; yet this vegetal element ultimately had nothing to do with the meaning of the work, which was articulated around the offensive syntax developed by the artist: to pinpoint the physical and ideological limits of individuals and communities, to test the possibilities and patience of institutions.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres used historicized forms to reveal their ideological foundations and to construct a new alphabet to struggle against sexual norms. Cattelan pushes the forms that he manipulates toward conflict and comedy: seeking out conflicts with operators of the art system through works that are ever more embarrassing, constricting, or cumbersome, and highlighting the comedy that underlies the power relations in this system through the intermediary of narratives that derail the recent history of art toward the burlesque. In a word, his behavior as an artist involves guiding the forms he manipulates toward delinquency.

PIERRE JOSEPH: LITTLE DEMOCRACY

Our lives unfold against a changing background of images and amid a flux of data that envelops everyday life. Images are formatted like products or are used to sell other objects; masses of data circulate.

Pierre Joseph's artistic project consists of inscribing meaning within this environment: it is not another critical position, but a productive practice, analogous to one that makes its way through a network, establishes an itinerary, and surfs. Joseph deals primarily with the conditions of the appearance and functioning of images, starting from the postulate that, these days, we reside within an enormous image zone, rather than in front of images: art is not another spectacle but an exercise of *détournage*. He develops a playful and instrumental relationship with forms, which he manipulates, samples, and adapts to new uses, establishing different processes of reanimation. Minimalist art thus serves as a set for *Cache cache killer*, 1991. Abstract art decorates an exhibition in the form of a treasure hunt (*La chasse au trésor ou l'aventure du spectateur disponible* [The Treasure Hunt or the Adventure of the Available Spectator], 1993), and the works of Robert Delaunay and Maurizio Nannucci are recycled as backdrops for new scenes in a film in which Joseph's "reanimated characters" wander about. In 1992, he remade pieces that interested him by Lucio Fontana, Jasper Johns, Heilo Oiticica, and Richard Prince. This instrumentalization of culture does not stem from a casual attitude in relation to history; quite the contrary, it establishes the conditions for free behavior in a society of managed consumption. In Joseph's work, the recycling of forms and images constitutes the basis of an ethics: we must invent ways of inhabiting the world. In the political sphere, submission to form has a name: dictatorship. A democracy, on the other hand, calls for constant role play, endless discussion, and negotiation. That Joseph chose the title *Little Democracy* to refer to the set of live "reanimated characters" seems completely logical. These characters, the first of which appeared in 1991, are presented in the form of an outfit worn by an extra. They are "installed" in the gallery or museum like any other work, on the evening of the show's opening: then they are replaced by a photograph, an index allowing the future owner to "reanimate" the piece at his leisure. These characters come from the image-system

of mythology, video games, comic strips, movies, and advertising: Superman, Catwoman, "color stealers" from a Kodak commercial, a painter, Casper the Ghost, or a replicant from *Blade Runner*. Sometimes, a slightly macabre element causes a shift: the surfer is dead, an injured character wears a bandage around his head, the ground where Superman stands is littered with cigarette butts and beer bottles, the cowboy lies face down. Some are presented against their true backgrounds: the blue of a bluescreen used for video superimposition, manifesting at once the characters' unreality and their potential for displacement onto various backgrounds and into endless scenarios. Others are presented as actors in an iconographic role play, wandering around the museum or the space of a group exhibition, surrounded by other works: after Duchamp, who intended to "use a Rembrandt as an ironing board," Joseph places his characters amid modern art that has become decor. His work always aims for the horizon of an exhibition in which the audience is hero: the art becomes a special effect in an interactive mise-en-scène. The process of reanimating the figure is twofold: it reanimates the works next to which the characters appear, and it makes the entire world a playground, a stage, or a set.

This system is also a political project: the artist speaks of the intelligent cohabitation of subjects and the backgrounds against which they move about, of the intelligent coexistence of human beings and the works they are given to admire. The reanimation of icons, which characterizes the gallery of stock characters that make up *Little Democracy*, represents a democratic form in its essence, without demagoguery or ponderous demonstration. Joseph is suggesting that we inhabit pre-existing narratives and unceasingly refabricate the forms that suit us. Here the goal of the image is to introduce playacting into systems of representation to keep them from becoming frozen, to detach forms from the alienating background where they become stuck if we take them for granted. A superficial reading of the characters might lead

one to believe that Joseph is an artist of the unreal, of popular entertainments. Yet the fairy-tale figures, cartoon characters, and science fiction heroes that populate this democracy do not call for a flight from reality but urge us to experience our reality through fiction. In a complex stage management of live characters, Casper the Ghost, Cupid, and the fairy function as so many images embedded in the system of the division of labor: these imaginary beings, Joseph explains, obey "a cyclical, controlled, and unchanging program," and their functional status hardly differs from that of an assembly line worker at Renault, or a waiter in a restaurant who takes an order, serves a meal, and brings the bill. These characters are extremely typecast; they are robot-portraits, images perfectly associated with a model-character, with a defined function. The true mythology from which they arise is the ideology of the division of labor and the standardization of products. The realm of the imaginary, indexed to the regime of production, indiscriminately affects plumbers and superheroes. The fairy illuminates things with her magic wand, the auto worker adjusts parts on an assembly line: work is the same everywhere, and it is this world of unchanging processes and potential dead ends that Joseph describes; images provide a way out.

The images Joseph offers must be experienced: they must be appropriated and reanimated and included in new arrangements. In other words, meanings must be displaced. And tiny shifts create enormous movements. Why do so many artists strive to remake, recopy, dismanter, and reconstruct the components of our visual universe? What makes Pierre Huyghe reshoot Hitchcock and Pasolini? What compels Philippe Parreno to reconstruct an assembly line intended for leisure? To produce an alternative space and time, that is, to reintroduce the multiple and the possible into the closed circuit of the social, and for this, the artist must go back as far as possible in the collective machinery. With the help of installations that affect the exhibition site, Joseph offers us experimental objects, active products,

and artworks that suggest new ways of apprehending the real and new types of investment in the art world. *Little Democracy* is something we can inhabit.