

A Temple of Healing Multiple Perspectives

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ment, rappellent certaines périodes de l'histoire de l'art: le Brancusi des années 1915-1925 pour l'utilisation du bois dans des compositions abstraites, mais aussi pour la dimension anthropomorphique. On pense à la *Colonne sans fin* et aux monuments funéraires roumains, de hauts piliers surmontés d'oiseaux, qui furent souvent à la source de l'art de Brancusi.

À la conscience vacillante de soi et de l'autre propre à notre monde contemporain, Helga Schlitter oppose un désir de restitution d'un pays imaginaire, de la contrée originaire dont l'Aztlan des aztèques serait la métaphore. Le geste créateur engendre alors une anamnèse, tributaire à son tour d'un questionnement sur le sens de l'histoire de l'art et des objets qui s'y inscrivent. L'artiste propose une *mise en intrigue*¹ de données historiques, la vie des peuples et la vie des formes, dans le but, semble-t-il, d'aller à l'encontre d'un désaisissement par rapport au réel qui serait le lot de notre époque. L'objet d'art

réussit-il encore à effectuer la transgression nécessaire pour qu'il y ait expérience esthétique profonde? Une façon d'y parvenir serait d'instaurer une écriture du figural, telle que l'entendait Lyotard, de construire des images sur le mode des correspondances et de la remémoration chère à Proust. Les influences précolombiennes et les motifs millénaires, tels que le croissant de lune ou le plumage réservé à la représentation du sorcier, cohabitent avec la sobriété d'une conception de la sculpture héritée de la modernité, le bois trouvé étant utilisé pour ses propres accidents et ses propriétés. Plastiquement, la profusion ornementale et le bois polychrome viennent servir un intérêt pour la donnée architecturale, la verticalité des oeuvres et la juxtaposition de leurs parties faisant allusion, entre autres, à l'image de la caryatide ou de l'atlante.

La figure du totem demeure cependant prédominante avec toute la puissance rituelle qui lui est attachée. Au-delà de la conno-

tation civilisationnelle, elle induit un travail de l'archétype, l'animal en l'occurrence, qui véhicule un désir de retrouver une essence perdue. La force occulte du geste d'ériger des monuments et de les agencer dans un certain ordre procède d'un retour au jeu primitif, que la présence des bêtes renforcerait en symbolisant une investigation de l'instinctif et de l'irrationnel. Ces monuments totémiques portent aussi les marques de diverses formes d'art populaire qui exploitent le bestiaire pour ce qu'il raconte de l'humain en tant que réceptacle de valeurs comme le sauvage par exemple.

Parce qu'elle puise à la fois aux sources de l'histoire de l'art et de l'ethnologie, la sculpture de Schlitter met en place un réseau de figures antinomiques et complémentaires. *Retour à Aztlan* pose la sculpture comme occupation de l'espace physique et culturel, tout en la mettant en relation avec l'expérience esthétique en tant que partie intégrante de la mosaïque identitaire. Les douze

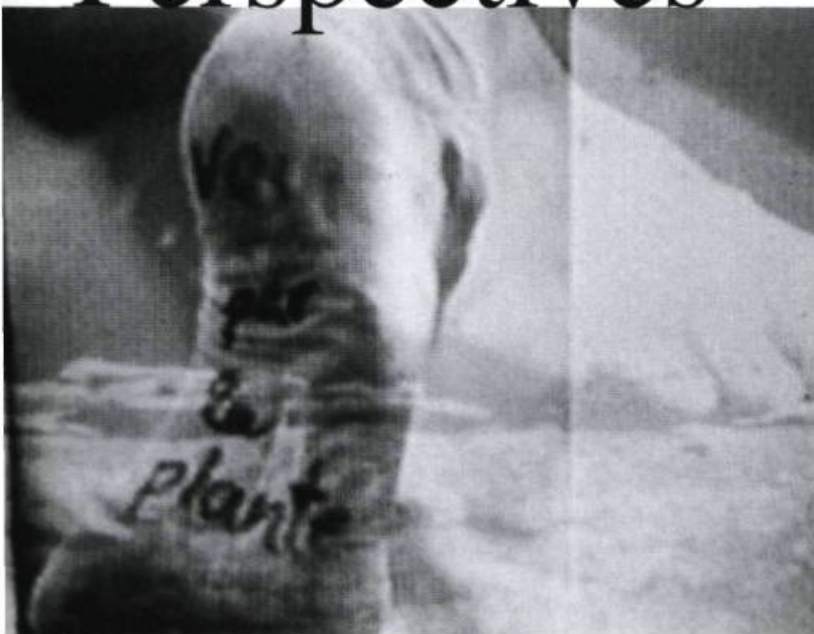
pièces circonscrivent une *place* où l'enchevêtrement des figures sollicite l'inconscient et conséquemment effectue la brisure temporelle nécessaire à une expérience qualitative et intensive du temps et de la mémoire. Cette transgression née du choc du passé et du présent, de l'entrecroisement d'archétypes culturels et du vécu intime contribuerait à la mise en place d'un "espace imaginal absolu" synonyme d'un espace anthropologique qui ouvre l'expérience à un temps hors de la linéarité du sens et de l'histoire historique². ■

Helga Schlitter, *Retour à Aztlan*
Galerie École des arts visuels,
Université Laval
16 novembre - 3 décembre 1995

NOTES :

1. Roger Chartier, "Le passé composé", *Traverses*, no. 40, printemps 1987, p. 14.
2. Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *La raison baroque. De Baudelaire à Benjamin*, Paris, Éditions Galilée, 1984, p.143.

A Temple of Healing: Multiple Perspectives



Hannelore Storm, *Un temple de guérison : lectures plurielles*, 1996. Installation. Still from video. Photo : Alain Chagnon.

Karen Trask

The lighting is low, almost dark as one enters the exhibition space; a roughly built facade suggestive of a construction site acts as screen for the projected image of a hospital corridor. This lighted image directs us into a narrow passageway; penetrating it, we are immediately confronted with the spectre of our own shadow walking ahead of us. Derouted, we ask, what is this? where are we? what is happening?

The multi-media installation entitled *Un temple de guérison : lectures plurielles* by Hannelore Storm exhibited in March 1996 at La Maison de culture Plateau Mont-Royal proposes two conditions to the viewer: first, to enter and second, to experience his or her physical presence within these two reconstructed, distinct yet interconnected interior spaces. Modeled after actual locations within the city, the make-shift facades of Storm's walk-in sculp-

tures create an illusory space for the viewer to access and explore the temporal, fragmented nature of human experience. The entrance is obvious, but many hesitate, preferring to circumvent this restricted space to scrutinize its construction from the exterior.

I chose to enter here, this present text wandering the passages of my own experience, for I have been there before. As a regular visitor to Storm's universe, my intention is to explore my interaction with and understanding of this work. In plumbing the lines of her interior space, these words scratch the surfaces of my own; where will they lead me? Could I lose myself?

One rarely enters illness willingly. It surprises us, forcing us down its passageways and the first emotion to greet us there is fear. If the artist has brought us here, it is because she knows the way all too well. And if not comfortable, the hospital corridor has become at least familiar; better to pass there as she suggests, "with one's eyes wide open."

As we enter this first narrow space, we encounter the confrontation and coalescence of opposing forces not usually thought of as co-existing within human experience. Graffiti-like words, "J'ai

Peter von Tiesenhausen, *Moelstrom*, 1996. Installation, detail. Richmond Art Gallery.

peur" scrawled on one wall and balanced by the partially erased, "Il fait beau"¹ written on the opposite wall remind us that fear and death are the constant companions of life and indeed contribute to its beauty. Small windows, reminiscent of a film strip, are cut into the corridor wall framing tiny fragments of x-rays and small black and white wood-cut images of faces, hands and feet printed on acetate. Lit from the back, they act as narrative, a miniature exhibition within an exhibition, but then we remember, in a hospital it is the marrow of our existence that is held up to the light. In a hospital, it is easy to forget that outside it may indeed, "faire beau."

At the end of the corridor, a television screen draws us into its contained but animated space. Here we experience the hospital from the patient's perspective; we become the patient. The ceilings, the floors dominate, giving an uneasy sense of loss of middle ground, loss of self. In this world, the patient's body becomes the corridor, pulsing with the rhythm of shiny floors metered by ominous feet.

In both Storm's installation spaces, video monitors occupy a central location and are key elements for the comprehension of the work. Here, the opposing forces as per-

ceived in the immediacy of the woodcut's primitive gesture and the intervening distancing of video's modern technology are combined. We are reminded that woodcut was once a modern technology that also revolutionized the communications world. For Storm, they are all tools of expression, essentially the same, different only by degrees.

Storm uses video to explore her presence in two public areas within the city; the hospital and the mountain. I sense each of the video monitors as standing in for the body of the artist. Through the superimposing of moving picture planes, repetition, the piecing together and juxtaposing of the many fragments, she tells us her personal story about these sites as possible places for healing. One story does not negate the other, rather both are necessary and connected.

Storm's interest lies within the creation of space itself, and more specifically a contained empty space. Here, emptiness is not a frightening void, but rather a potential for existing, a place where emptiness can speak, and a space for sharing that existence. It is a space where the imperfections of life are accepted and appreciated for their particular beauty. I experience this installation and particularly the second space as an expression of the artist's appreciation

of the generosity and richness of life in Montreal. The presence of the mountain, as an essential part of this city is a central element in the experience of the second space. The corridor space physically compresses the viewer. Our shadows are ominously close and intrusive, obstructing our perspective. Pushed along by the space itself, we have little control of our direction; there is only advancing or retreating. But, once beyond the corridor, a giant image of forest and green falls on another constructed wall. Entering this quieter, reflective space is not so obvious. Its entrance works more like a tear in one's perception, a place where one arrives by accident, or by magic. Here, one must step through an imaginary barrier: the projected image of a fallen tree. Arriving unexpectedly in the expansiveness of this space we rediscover our breath.

To set foot here, as the artist proposes in the video is to "voir par la plante du pied", or to see through the sole of the foot. The words "plante" and "sole" although meaning essentially the same, can lead us to the richness of their respective roots; both connected in the ideas of planting and the soil. But, it is not the usual ground one walks on here. This is an open interior space, where art-

ist and spectator are allowed to dream and to play. The body can relax, foot prints crawl up the walls, feet walk on trees, the body becomes tree. As portrayed in the video, the horizontal of the tree is superimposed over that of the hospital bed. This tree, though imperfect and almost completely uprooted, lives on tenaciously leafing year after year - testimony to the fragile strength of our physical beings.

There is a paradox in Storm's work, one I have also sensed in many other artists' work. There is in her desire to disclose and explore as many points of view as possible, a determined almost frenzied resolve to at last reveal and encompass the essence of a reality. She continues despite the knowledge that success will only be partial and momentary. Succeeding does not even appear to be the objective; it is the search which is important. This installation is the attempt by Storm to explore and to communicate her insight into the nature of health and healing. ■

Hannelore Storm, *Un temple de guérison : lectures plurielles*
Maison de la culture Plateau
Mont-Royal
March 1996

NOTE :
1. From: Jean-Paul Sartre, *Les Mouches*.

Maelstrom and River Styx

Paula Gustafson

Any kid who has ever built a fort out in the bush understood what Peter von Tiesenhausen was doing with alder branches and blackberry vines during the week prior to January 25, when he was weaving his 24-foot diameter *Maelstrom* sculpture inside the Richmond Art Gallery. For gallery goers who watched the 36-year-old artist at work, it was easy to imagine his boyhood in Alberta's Peace River country, or the summers he has spent in the Yukon as the lead hand in a gold mining camp. However, why he was building a 17-foot