

LES MONDES INVERSÉS

CONTEMPORARY ART AND POPULAR CULTURES

MARINA **ABRAMOVIĆ** / CARLOS **AIRES** / GHADA **AMER** /
KAMROOZ **ARAM** / **ART ORIENTÉ OBJET** /
MARCEL **BERLANGER** / DAVID **BROGNON** & STÉPHANIE **ROLLIN** /
PAULO **CLIMACHAUSKA** / JEREMY **DELLER** & ALAN **KANE** /
WIM **DELVOYE** / GABRIELE **DI MATTEO** / JIMMIE **DURHAM** /
KENDELL **GEERS** / MICHEL **GOUÉRY** / TAL ISAAC **HADAD** /
CARSTEN **HÖLLER** / MIKE **KELLEY** / GARETH **KENNEDY** /
EMILIO **LÓPEZ-MENCHERO** / PAUL **McCARTHY** /
JOHAN **MUYLE** / AMY **O'NEILL** / GRAYSON **PERRY** /
JAVIER **RODRIGUEZ** / EDWARD **SAÏD** & JOE **SCANLAN** /
YINKA **SHONIBARE MBE** / WALTER **SWENNEN** /
PASCALE MARTHINE **TAYOU** / BORIS **THIÉBAUT** /
GERT & UWE **TOBIAS** / PATRICK **VAN CAECKENBERGH** /
ERIC **VAN HOVE** / RAPHAËL **VAN LERBERGHE** /
JOANA **VASCONCELOS** / THIERRY **VERBEKE** /
MARIE **VOIGNIER** & VASSILIS **SALPISTIS** /
ULLA **VON BRANDENBURG**

THE EXHIBITION “THE WORLDS TURNED UPSIDE DOWN” REFERS TO AN OLD ENGLISH DISSENTING FOLK BALLAD WRITTEN IN 1646. THE SHOW OPENS A VISION THAT WILL LEAD TO THE OVERTHROW OF THE OLD WORLD, THE “TOPPLING OVER” OF MONARCHY TO INTRODUCE DEMOCRACY. THE SYMBOLIC OVERTHROW OF THE LEADING ORDER IS A RECURRENT CHARACTERISTIC OF FOLK CULTURE, PARTICULARLY CARNIVAL.

DRAWING ITS INSPIRATION FROM FOLK TRADITIONS, FORGOTTEN CRAFTS AND OLD FESTIVALS, THE ARTISTS FEATURED IN THIS EXHIBITION PRODUCE MANY UPHEAVALS OF SPECIFIC ORDERS: AESTHETIC, POLITICAL, MORAL, CULTURAL, ECONOMIC, RELIGIOUS, ETC. THEY OPEN THE PATH TO OTHER POSSIBILITIES, OTHER ORGANISATIONS, OTHER STANDARDS ... SUGGESTING AN INFINITY OF “WORLDS TURNED UPSIDE DOWN”.

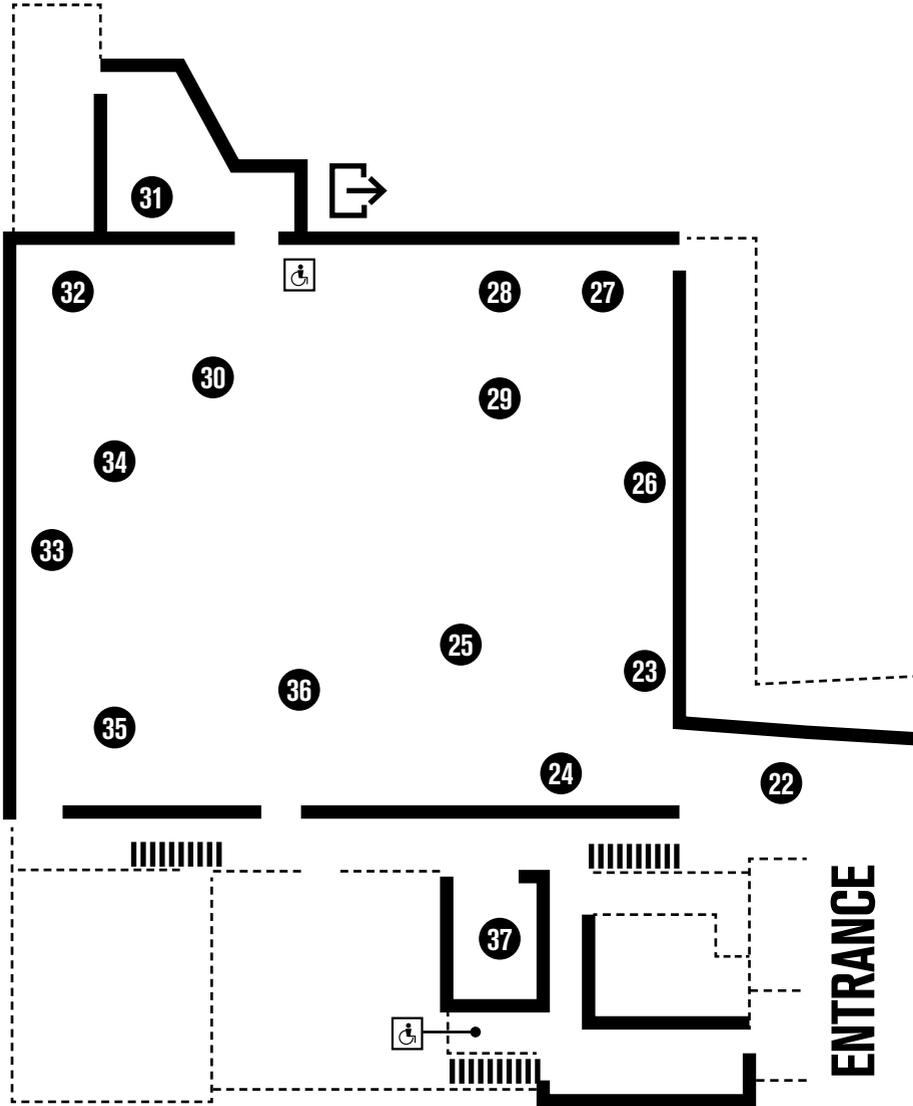
Read p.32 for more info about the concepts and the exhibition.

**Webapp available for smartphones.
Type in your browser <http://guide.bps22.be>
and discover the exhibition.
WI-FI free in the museum.**



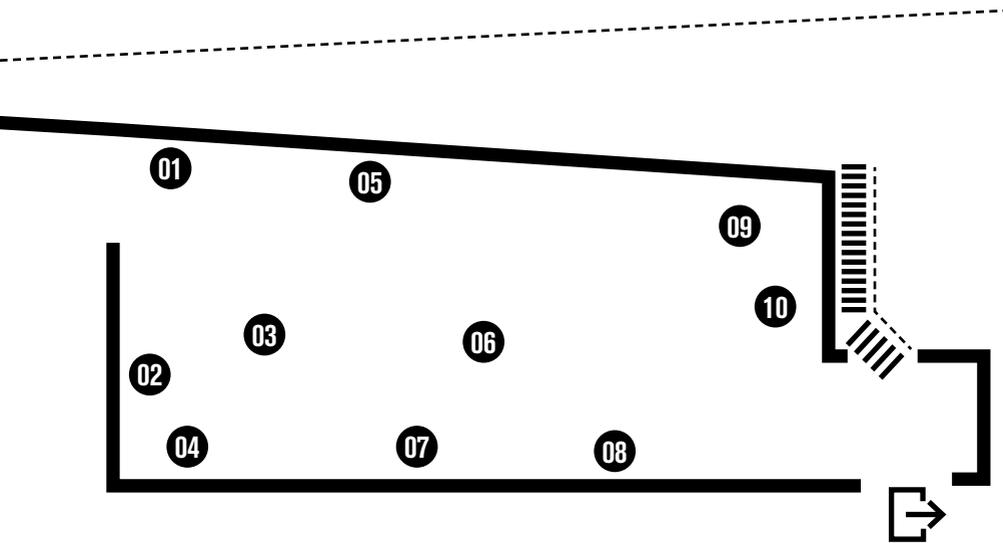
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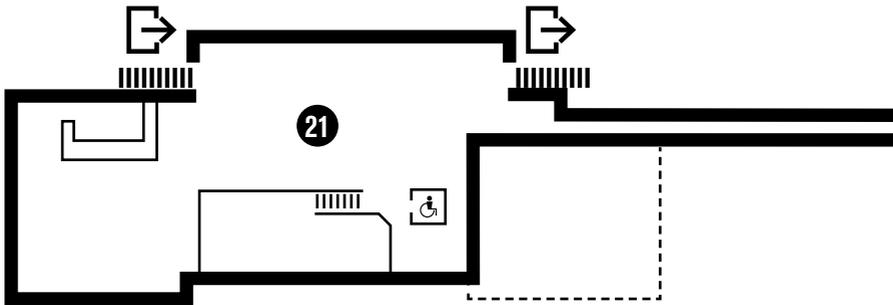
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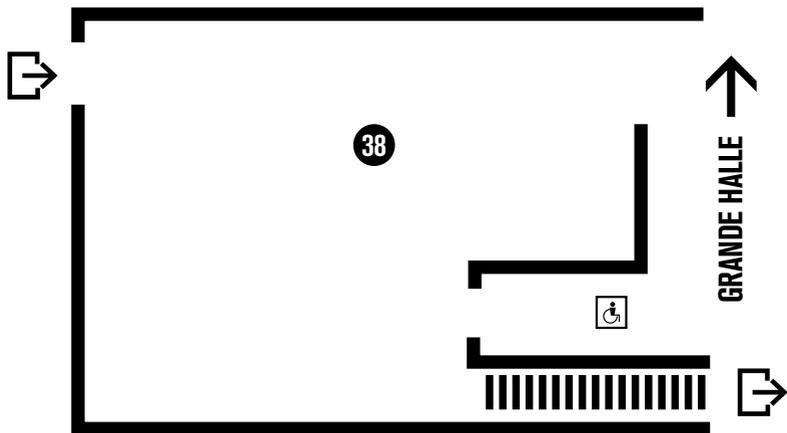
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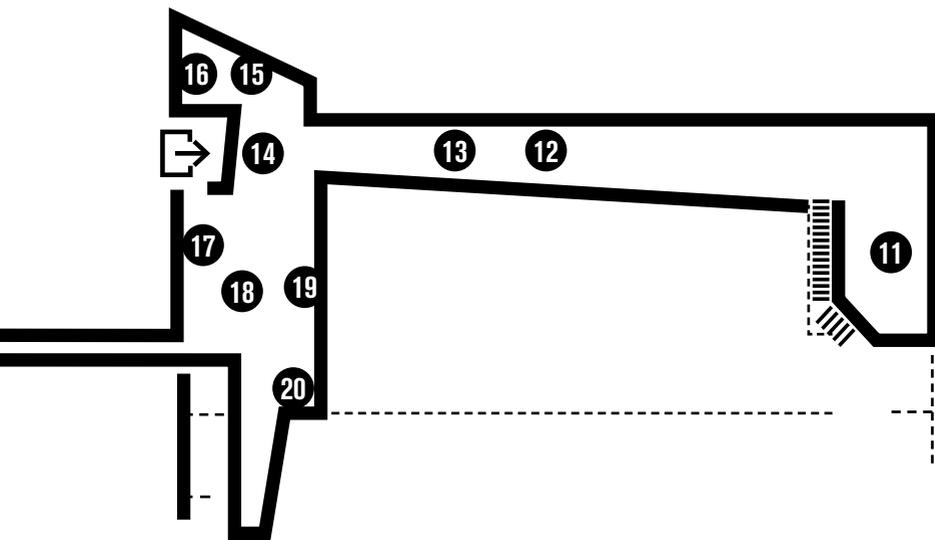
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SALLE PIERRE DUPONT

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01 RAPHAËL VAN LERBERGHE

Chimay (BE), 1978

Various, 2012-2015

BPS22 Production. Courtesy Galerie Nadja Vilenne, Liège

The artist affixes frames on old postcards emblematic of an ancient, stereotyped vision of locations, regions, festivals and heroes (including the Tierscé races). Thus isolated, the elements change shape and reform, acquiring a new sense amplified by their registration in a network of mental semantic channels. From one frame to another, from one isolated detail to a phrase, from a photograph to a traced drawing, from a zoom to a cut, from one element to a whole, from the whole to a section, Raphael Van Lerberghe elaborates significant sequences, suggesting associations, inducing questioning, re-formalising events and coincidences of anybody's existence. Reorganising through suggestions rather than through assertions, he composes little moving cartographies with multiple reminiscences (psychoanalytical, biographical, poetic, humorous, formal, etc.) resonating well beyond their frame and finding an echo in the other works of the exhibition.

02 JEREMY DELLER & ALAN KANE

London (UK), 1966 / Nottingham (UK), 1961

Folk Archive, 2005

Courtesy Art : Concept, Paris

Attracted to the various domains connected to the history of art, Jeremy Deller carried out the "Folk Archive" project with Alan Kane from 1999-2005, an inventory of folk, contemporary or traditional traditions and productions in England: costumes created for village festivals, tuning, advertisements, banners, stands, etc. Collected in a publication and presented during several exhibitions, this archive celebrates folk expressions with an often-denied creativity. It also recognises the quality and originality of the forms of popular creations that are often excluded from artistic institutions, thus reversing the hierarchy of genres.

*DELLER, Jeremy, KANE, Alan, *Folk Archive : Contemporary Popular Art from the UK*, London, Book Works, 2005.

03 CARSTEN HÖLLER

Brussels (BE), 1961

Karussell, 1999

Vanmoerkerke Collection, Belgium

German artist Carsten Höller has an atypical journey in the art world: he holds a doctorate in plant pathology on the olfactory communication in insects and enjoys disrupting the usual perceptions of the art world by introducing elements of doubt and trouble. “*My objects, he explains, are tools or mechanisms designed for a specific use, which is to create a moment of slight confusion or to provoke hallucinations in the widest sense of the term.*” * Thus, his carousel immediately evokes childhood memories and popular fun-fairs. Yet, it turns too slowly and noiselessly. Its apprehension, in a first while familiar, easy and accompanied with happy childhood memories, is disrupted and becomes a strange element, triggering an almost frightening reaction.

*HÖLLER, Carsten, in: OBRIST, Hans Ulrich, *Conversations, vol.1*, Paris, Manuella éditions, 2008, p.412.

04 WALTER SWENNEN

Brussels (BE), 1946

Tête de mort, 1991

Collection of the Hainaut Province. On deposit at the BPS22

Captivated by the theme of the skull, Walter Swennen transcribes this motif here in an almost burlesque style. The gestural freedom seems to contradict the seriousness of the classical theme of the vanitas. This is particularly true as the artist attaches a funnel to the skull, while placing a “shameless” whistle, the classical accessory of popular festivities. The whole recalls the grotesque and unbridled humour of the popular festivals that captivated James Ensor and the Mexican Day of the Dead, a ceremony during which death is merrily rejoiced. In a seemingly simple image, the work thus associates technically complex juxtaposition of layers, *high and low cultures*.

05 KAMROOZ ARAM

Shiraz (IRN), 1978

Last Gleaming, 2006

Mihrab-e-Haraam, 2005

Collection of the Servais Family, Brussels

Although he spent his youth in the United States, Kamrooz Aram maintained an interest for Persian decorative tradition and offers a wide array of old carpet motifs. As Islamic art historian Oleg Grabar notes, the ornament is a visual form with no other referent than the object on which it is affixed.* With these patterns, the artist produces large paintings that simultaneously question western abstract art and eastern history of art, creating works with rich semantic ramifications that deploy both in the East and in the West. His works allow for distinct apprehensions depending on the mobilized traditions. The two canvases on show associate various representation techniques and different codes for constructing the real. Both exploit the ambivalence of the decorative motif in the pictorial field, oscillating between scorned, almost kitsch decoration and pictorial depth.

*On this topic, see: GRABAR, Oleg, *L'ornement. Formes et fonctions dans l'art islamique*, Paris, Flammarion, 2013.

06 YINKA SHONIBARE MBE

London (UK), 1962

Scramble for Africa, 2003

Work commissioned by the Museum of African Art, Long Island City, N.Y., Pinnell Collection, Dallas

Born in London from Nigerian parents, Yinka Shonibare MBE questions western political history through African history of art and decorative tradition. He uses the well-known wax (or *kitenge*) fabrics that appear as the emblem of African authenticity. However, these fabrics were initially destined for the Indonesian market and were produced in Holland before arriving in Africa, where the local populations adopted them before they became an attribute of Africanness. These printed fabrics have become the "brand" of the artist in the large installations that reconstitute emblematic scenes of History. Shonibare dresses headless mannequins with clothes made from this fabric, thus creating a sort of aporia between the motifs printed and old-fashioned cut of the costumes. In the absence of a head, the mannequin becomes an abstract entity deprived of individuality. Here, the artist places the characters around a table on which a map of 1855 Africa is drawn. It is the date of the Berlin conference, when 14 colonial powers shared the continent without involving any autochthon. The installation suggests that, with other interlocutors, the history of Africa and the World could have been very different.

07 JOANA VASCONCELOS

Paris (FR), 1971

Madame du Barry, 2007

Cement, acryl, hand-made cotton crochet

Courtesy Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris - Brussels

Joana Vasconcelos' creative process is based on the discreet appropriation and subversion of pre-existing objects. Through operations of assembling elements, the artist casts an amused yet critical eye on contemporary society, particularly on the identity assignments that refer to the status of women, class differences or still, nationalities. From then on, in her works and installations, the usual artisan/industrial, private/public, tradition/modernity, feminine/masculine, and erudite popular/culture dichotomies are reinvested with a subversive dimension that a rapid approach would not perceive. This work refers to Madame du Barry, who was the last mistress and confidante of King Louis XV, a lover of art and fashion who was beheaded after the Revolution. Whilst evoking the classical statue art, which was originally painted and coloured, the work of ceramic concrete seems corseted by a black trellis that completely surrounds it. Evocation of an artisan traditional technique long attributed to women, this black trellis is more a hindrance that keeps imprisoned than an attribute of seduction.

08 MARCEL BERLANGER

Brussels (BE), 1965

L'Autruche, 2015

La Méduse, 2015

Arlequin, 2015

BPS22 Production. Courtesy Galerie Rodolphe Janssen, Brussels

This triptych on the Binche Carnival was commissioned for the exhibition. The artist excels in his “art of revelation” in the photographic sense of the term. Marcel Berlangier’s painting does not deliver a subject as an advertisement would, but it also reveals the way it is built. The painted image and manufacture/apparition process are intimately interwoven and are both shown. However, it takes time to apprehend them. If the motive is immediately graspable, it disintegrates once the viewer approaches it to deliver its own constitution: a network built out of touches of paint, structured line, articulated plans placed over a surface. In this sense, the motif appears by revelation. Paradoxically, this visibility of the process celebrates its subject, in this case the most famous of all Belgian carnivals.

09 PAUL McCARTHY

Utha (US), 1945

Untitled (Shit Face), 2002. Silicon brown

Untitled (Dick Eye), 2002. Silicon dildo

Untitled (Jack), 2002. Silicon dark red

Untitled (Dick Hat), 2003. Silicon red

Untitled (Pot Head), 2002. Silicon black

Vanhaerents Art Collection, Brussel

Paul McCarthy is one of the most turbulent figures of the American art scene and his work continuously stirs up controversy. The last example to date is his Christmas/Plug Christmas tree that was destroyed in Paris last winter. In a carnival-like frenzy, the artist constantly turns to the “low trivial” (sexuality, scatology, vomiting, etc.), which is usually hidden and buried, to exhibit it openly in all its crudeness and vulgarity. Constantly inverting the values and hierarchies of art, he erects as models the hidden or absent

figures of the history of art. For the past fifteen years, he mobilises pirates for some-times-gigantic installations and outrageous performances. If there was one reference to the myth of pirates, who are celebrated today in libertarian and neo-revolutionary circles as pre-democratic models, McCarthy's are ridiculed by their oversized sexual attributes that deform their faces.

10 THIERRY VERBEKE

Lille (FR), 1970

United Colors, 2014

Patchwork of fabrics, chain and weft of textile recycling marked with the skull and bones of Edward England's pirate

Collection of the Hainaut Province. On deposit at the BPS22

A black flag flies above Paul McCarthy's pirates. It is made of a patchwork of fabrics and marked with the crossed bones and skull of the legendary *Jolly Roger*. With this work, Thierry Verbeke blurs two social and cultural references by associating them. The first - that of the patchwork - was long associated to an exclusively feminine expressive practice to which the western tradition refused the statute of art form; the second is that of the historical-mythical buccaneer that recalls that piracy was also a world upside down, an attempt at setting up a counter society that would be more egalitarian for sailors, a wish that, at the time, was nothing more than a democratic utopia (ex. *Libertalia*). Presented as such in the exhibition, the flag will then be "activated" and will hang at the façade of the BPS22, a reference to punk concert locations that announced the event of the night and will thus gain a patina with use.

11 GARETH KENNEDY

Galway (IE), 1979

The Uncomfortable Science, 2014

Production Ar/ge Kunst

For the past years, the Irish artist has focused on the relations between folk traditions and political discourse. Invited by the Bolzano Ar/ge Kunts centre, he studied the position of an Italian region bordering Austria (Alto Adige in Italian; Südtirol in German). Originally part of the Austrian-Hungarian empire, the region was considered part of Italy from 1919, a country that tried in vain to italianize the German-speaking populations. In 1938, the fascist and Nazi regimes agreed that the national language should be Italian. German speakers were invited to emigrate in countries under Nazi domination. The Nazis then studied in depth the traditions of German-speaking populations, mobilising the best specialists, including anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, whose mask is exhibited by the artist amongst others traditionally sculpted. From a few archive documents testifying of the “reconstruction”, even the “purification”, of these traditions, the artist warns spectators against the myth of “pure” traditions and their dangerous political use. The wooden structure is a reference to the Stüben, traditional restaurants in northern Italy where concerts and meetings were also held, and is an invitation to debate and exchange.

12 MARIE VOIGNIER & VASSILIS SALPISTIS

Ris-Orangis (FR), 1973 / Thessaloniki (GRC), 1975

Des trous pour les yeux, 2009

Vidéo, 12'

Courtesy Marcelle Alix, Paris and Kappatos Gallery, Athens

Marie Voignier's videos draw their poetic strength from the sobriety of their falsely documentary staging induced by a stable frame and very limited camera movements. The tale offered seems to evolve to the confines of fiction and reality without allowing the spectator to decide. This short film made in collaboration with Vassilis Salpistis stages a researcher in an ethnographic museum who abandons his office to put on a folk costume and start the appropriate dances and movements. Almost humorously, the work questions the possibility of maintaining traditions under the form of heritage. Do popular feasts and folk traditions have another sense than being accomplished by the people for whom they mean something? How does a tradition survive to its official heritage designation? And how do the relations between a museum art form (in vitro) and activated and lived art (in vivo) articulate?

13 GHADA AMER

Cairo (EG), 1963

Much again (Black series), 2000

Acrylic, embroidery and gel on canvas

Grey Flowers, 2000

Acrylic, pencil and gel on canvas

Collection of the Servais Family, Brussels

Egypt-born Ghada Amer spent more than 20 years in France before settling down in New York where she lives and works. Her art supposes codes and representations; feminine and masculine, history of art and folk culture, major art (painting) and minor art (embroidery), art and craft, figuration and abstraction. While giving the impression of following the representational codes of abstract gestural painting that a quick eye would erroneously validate, she opposes embroidery, a media considered as a feminine craft and often qualified of "hobby" to great painting, which was long a noble, masculine privilege. She then duplicates figures of women borrowed from erotic men magazines, by deliberately putting to the fore the threads left aside by the "work". Feminine pleasures and leisure translate the artist's will to merge content and a manner of doing, to question the qualitative criteria that reign over artistic creation.

14 GERT & UWE TOBIAS

Kronstadt (RO) 1973

Zonder titel, 2010

Collection of the Hainaut Province. On deposit at the BPS22

Romanian twins Gert and Uwe Tobias deliver a complex work where references to the history of art (Russian Constructivism, Modernist Graphic design) merge with media culture (adverts, horror film posters) and to Central European culture. Sometimes using ancient techniques such as wood engraving and ceramics, they build a singular formal universe that evokes a fantasy yet happy world between allusive figuration and free abstraction where a sort of amused morbidity thrives. The tapestry presented is a commission by the Hainaut Province. The artists proposed to enlarge a decorative motif that is both floral and kabbalistic, obvious and secret, using the typographic signs of an old typewriter.

15 ART ORIENTÉ OBJET

Paris (FR), 1991

Feed-back, 2004

(Le Tigre - Work excerpted from the series "*The Year My Voice Broke*")

Private collection

Untitled , 1997

(Le Panda - Work excerpted from the series "*The Year My Voice Broke*")

Private collection, Paris

From its very beginnings, the Art Orienté Objet duet (Marion Laval-Jeantet and Benoît Mangin) has worked on opening the artistic field to exogenous knowledge such as medical sciences, chemistry, esoterica, ethnography, ethology, forgotten crafts, folk cultures, etc. Thus, they started making in 1992 the series *The Year My Voice Broke*, a collection of knitted hunting trophies, including a tiger and a panda that are presented in this exhibition. To make these pieces, the artists called upon ancient taxidermy (for the mouths and teeth) and knitting techniques. "*These techniques, explained Marion Laval-Jeantet, are consistent with our bias for the Other, the minority, the knowingly put aside. So we knit because it is a slow, depreciated craft technique that goes against the plastification of the industrialised world.*" *

*LAVEL-JEANTET, Marion, in : BUREAUD, Annick, 'Art Orienté Objet rencontre avec l'autre', in : art press, n°420, mars 2015, p.34.

16 ULLA VON BRANDENBURG

Karlsruhe (ALL), 1974

Mamuthones, 2011

Vidéo 16 mm, 3'06"

Courtesy of the artist and Art : Concept, Paris

The work of Ulla von Brandenburg regularly reactivates past forms of expression: the painted panorama (like we find in *Waterloo*), the living painting, and the 8 or 16 mm film. Trained as a stage designer, she has organised some exhibitions as stage dramas, like in the *Passion of Christ*. It is almost naturally that the two large colourful patchwork fabric curtains, a family reminiscence of the artist, should open the Great Hall of the BPS22. A manner of dramatizing the exhibition and interrogating its value as cultural model for the presentation of objects. But also to underline the key role of the spectator in the activation of works. These two characteristics typify folk cultures. *Mamuthones* is a short 16 mm film in black and white made from the panoramic executed at counter sense from the movement of the characters (the "Mamuthones", figures of Sardinia folklore). The image is vaporious; the black and white attenuates details, the décor is at times burnt by the light; the movements seem jerky. The artist transforms this short folk dance into a poetic, melancholic reverie that awakens childhood memories.

17 JAVIER RODRIGUEZ

Guadalajara (MEX), 1980

Epifanía Futbolera, 2007-2009

Collection of the Hainaut Province. On deposit at the BPS22

The work of Javier Rodriguez is based on the use of everyday objects that he transforms. For example, he alters the rules of games of luck and games strategies, such as those of chess, puzzles or dices. This piece was imagined in 2007 when the artist lived in Pierto Vallatra, Mexico, and where he discovered the craft of the Huichol Native Americans, consisting of wooden replicas of objects covered with small coloured beads. The artist then commissioned a football adorned with these beads, bringing closer the hexagonal motifs of the traditional football with the hexagonal motif of the Huichol art representing the Peyote flower. The six-leaved cactus has been used since the dawn of time to ritual ends, particularly for its hallucinogen effects. The artist thus binds the practice of football and a sort of Native American art form by underlying the alienating dimension that sport can have.

18 MIKE KELLEY

Michigan (US), 1954

SS Future Primitive, 2000

Private collection, Brussels

Blending, with a cleverly controlled art of offsetting and inalienable sense of freedom, the universe of popular culture with the erudite references of high culture, the work of Mike Kelley takes every form and mobilises all sorts of techniques: drawing, painting, sculpture, installation, performance, heterogeneous object, photography, video, sonorous creations, etc. This sculpture made of the frame of a roughly cut up wood is enriched with various accessories (dog collar, primitive statuette, soundtrack) evoking a temporal telescoping, a whirlwind without linear marking, between past and future. The overall form mobilises unconscious effects that are “steered” by the accessories in contradictory directions. For art critic Jean-Max Colard, *“We touch to the principles of his work: breaking with formal and sexual conventions, preferring the informal and craft to classical canons, encouraging spectators to get rid of established judgements, refusing the idea of a stable culture that would look all others from up high.”* *

*COLARD, Jean-Max, ‘L’hommage du Centre Pompidou à l’artiste Mike Kelley’, in: www.lesinrocks.com, 04.05/2013.

19 BORIS THIÉBAUT

Charleroi (BE), 1981

With Hendrick Goltzius

(La chute de Tantale, Ixion, Phaeton et Icare)

Collection of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. On deposit at the BPS22

The work of Boris Thiébaud is build as a dialectic synthesis between classical drawing and the radicalism of modernist minimalism. Drawing his inspiration from the mythological shape of the dragon haunting the regional popular legends, he discovers that, for Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges, "*The dragon descends from the snake and the bird, elements of earth and air.*"

*. Matter and spirit, heaviness and flight are the principles that guide his drawings made up of enlarged fragments of the mannerist engravings of Hendrik Goltzius (1558-1617). They are born from the erasing of a pencilled-in background, which was obtained by a dense network of free traits. The background of drawings recalls automatic writing, while the erasing technique relates to the meticulous gesture of the engraver that chisels his plate. Gestural freedom and technical control, short cuts of the couples lightness/heaviness, air/matter, telescope each other to give form to details of figures confronting the flatness of black rectangular forms symbolising a modernism that endlessly haunts today's artistic production.

*BORGES, Jorge Luis, *Le Livre des êtres imaginaires*, translation Françoise Rosset, Paris, Gallimard (Coll. 'L'Imaginaire', p.90.

20 JIMMIE DURHAM

Arkansas (US), 1940

Malinche, 1988

Collection S.M.A.K., Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Gent

Born in the United States in a Cherokee family in 1940, Jimmie Durham long fought for the Native American cause and civil rights. His art then participated from a quest for identity, denouncing the forms of segregation experienced in his country. After settling down in Europe in 1994, he adopted a more general viewpoint that did not lose any of its critical pertinences. Although he refuses the label "Native American artist", he draws a dynamic capacity in the Cherokee culture. "*Constant change - adaptability (...) is a tradition that our artists have specifically celebrated and used to change things and fortify our societies.*"*. His work stems from a process of assembly and juxtaposing raw materials or found objects, such as the *Malinche*, the Indian wife (probably nahua) of Conquistador Hernán Cortés. The latter plays a key role in the Spanish conquest of Mexico, as an interpreter, advisor and intermediary. Today, Malinche remains a popular figure that represents various contradictory aspects: she simultaneously symbolises betrayal, a consenting victim or still, the symbolic mother of today's modern Mexican people.

*DURHAM, Jimmie, 'Ni' Go Tlunh A Doh Ka', in: FISHER, Jean (dir.), Jimmie Durham. Certain Lack of Coherence: Writings on Art and Cultural Politics, Londres, Kola Press, 1993, p.108.

21 CARLOS AIRES

Malaga (ES), 1974

Opening Night, 2012

Courtesy ADN Galeria, Barcelona

In several of his installations and series, Carlos Aires explores the abundant iconography offered by communication technologies, mixing religion, violence, sexuality and political history, particularly that of Spain, from the civilian war to the end of the dictatorship. The baroque magnificence of his country of origin also inspires his work and he counters its effects by his uniform use of black. The installation *Opening Night* condenses these preoccupations: 1131 printed-paper lanterns hang from the roof of the BPS22. Although the garlands of lampoons inevitably suggest a notion of party and popular rejoice, the use of black and white subdues this impression, which is further reinforced by their geometric sequencing. The observation of images confirms this strange sentiment: these are images taken from the media, representing the troubled history of the 20th century. The artist associates his corollary of end and death to the idea of festiveness; to the temporary euphoria, he adds the certitude of tragedy.

GRANDE HALLE

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22 ULLA VON BRANDENBURG

Karlsruhe (ALL), 1974

Curtain Diamonds, 2011

Patchworks of fabrics

Collection of the Hainaut Province. On deposit at the BPS22.

The work of Ulla von Brandenburg regularly reactivates past forms of expression: the painted panorama (like we find in *Waterloo*), the living painting, and the 8 or 16 mm film. Trained to stage design, she has organised some exhibitions as dramas in stages, like in the *Passion of Christ*. It is almost naturally that the two large colourful patchwork fabric curtains, a family reminiscence of the artist, should open the Great Hall of the BPS22. A manner of dramatizing the exhibition and interrogating its value as cultural model for the presentation of objects. But also to underline the key role of the spectator in the activation of works. These two characteristics typify folk cultures. *Mamuthones* is a short 16 mm film in black and white made from the panoramic executed at counter sense from the movement of the characters (the "Mamuthones", figures of Sardinia folklore). The image is vaporous; the black and white attenuates details, the décor is at times burnt by the light; the movements seem jerky. The artist transforms this short folk dance into a poetic, melancholic reverie that awakens childhood memories.

23 GRAYSON PERRY

Chelmsford (UK), 1960

It's Never Too Late to Have a Happy Childhood, 2000

Revenge of the Alison Girls, 2000

Collection Mudam Luxembourg - Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean

Exuberant figure of the English art scene, Grayson Perry produces a heterogeneous work blending various techniques, autobiographic references and singular viewpoints on the world. Associating art and craft, Perry develops a preference for ceramic, an ancient technique with which he creates classically shaped vases adorned with a complex, personal décor. We find his personal, at times pop art imagery where dark humour and burlesque unfold after attentively looking at the work that a mere glance would not perceive. The artist evokes "guerrilla tactics" to qualify its method of attracting spectators, playing with effects of surprise and irritation. The formal and technical diversity of his productions overturns the traditional hierarchies of the art system.

24 EDWARD SAÏD & JOE SCANLAN

Jérusalem (ISR), 1935-2003 / Ohio (US), 1961

Classism: an introduction (excerpt), 2015

Lettering and cactus

Using the introduction of the book *L'Orientalisme* by American-Palestinian author Edward Saïd, American artist Joe Scanlan displaces the West-East relationship towards one that binds contemporary art and folk culture. In this founding book of post-colonial studies, Saïd analyses the western vision of the Middle East as it appeared in art and literature and its political implications. He develops four thesis: the political and cultural domination of the East by the West, the depreciation of the Arab language, the demonization of Arabic and Islam, and the Palestinian cause. Scanlan uses and changes Saïd's text, transforming or adding words to the original text to oppose what he calls Classicism to folk art. He thus demonstrates how the former imposes the latter a definition to subject it or soften its subversive character. Vast mural installation that must be crossed in its length (or read the accompanying booklet), this work gives the overall tone of the exhibition through its manner of articulating the relations between Art and popular culture.

25 KENDELL GEERS

Johannesburg (SA), 1968

Kode-X, 2002-2003

D.Daskalopoulos Collection, Athens

Born to an Afrikaners family, Kendell Geers always intrinsically linked his own life experiences to his work. *Kode-X*, a title with esoteric undertones, gathers dozens of religious statuettes, globes and a figure of media culture (Lara Croft) found on various flea markets. There, the objects were emptied of their symbolic function or profaned (i.e. sent back to profane activities, placed each on the same level). The artist uses this egalitarian mechanism while re-injecting a part of mystery in each statuette by covering them in strips of red and white plastic symbolising danger. Turning their back to the viewers, the heterogeneous statuettes seem to concentrate their magic forces to the inside of the cube formed by the shelves (reference to Islam's Kaaba). Thus, the artists offers a new magical-spiritual mechanism in the same way as folk cultures can, using syncretism, transform and reassemble into a consistent whole different elements with varied, sometimes converse significances.

26 JOHAN MUYLE

Charleroi (BE), 1956

Q-c-hi mangerà, vivrà, 2001

Collection of the Hainaut Province. On deposit at the BPS22
Courtesy Galerie Yoko Uhoda, Liège

This animated painting is a portrait of the artist made using cine-banners, the film banners found in Madras, India. Everyone is invited to stick their head into the mouth thus acting as food while triggering the animation of the work's mobile elements. This sequence refers to Greek mythology. Her father transformed Daphne, fleeing the assiduity of God of Love, Apollo, into laurel. Since then, the tree is linked to Apollo and symbolizes immortality and glory (ex. the crown). The song accompanying this play, *Ciao Bella* is the song of Italian anti-fascists during the Second World War. It evokes the buried bodies of the partisans who rest under the (beautiful) flower of Freedom. The work links Daphne's refusal and the resistance of Italian partisans, evoking the cycles of life (swallowing-dejection, birth-death, altering seasons) characterising folk cultures.

27 WIM DELVOYE

Wervik (BE), 1965

Cloaca N°5, 2006

Wim Delvoye Studio Collection
Courtesy Rodolphe Janssens Gallery

Few artists have mixed the Noble and the Vile throughout their career quite like Wim Delvoye. To the extent that we could analyse his entire work around this paradigmatic reversal. The group of *Cloaca*, machines miming precisely the human digestive system, is one of the artist's most striking. Elevating the excrement to the rank of sublime and onerous (the art market is also concerned by the gesture), the artist effectively accomplishes the radical reversal symbolically executed during carnival where "below the belt" goes up (scatology and sexual misconduct, although often feigned, are then de rigueur). The whole is dressed up in Chanel N°5 logo.

*DANNATT, Adrian, 'Le Sublime inversé ou deux ou trois choses que je sais à propos de lui', in : *Wim Delvoye. Introspective*, Bruxelles, Fonds Mercator, 2012, p.332.

28 AMY O'NEILL

Pennsylvanie (US), 1971

Red/White Stripes, Blue Rectangle Mirrored, 2008

Red/White Stripes, 2008

Courtesy Praz-Delavallade, Paris

Plunging into the work of Amy O'Neill is like choosing a long stroll in the dreamlike decor of deep America where the relations between popular culture, identity and memory play out. In many of her works, she questions the very foundations of American folk cultures and processes of identity construction and resulting politics. One of her favourite subject is the national flag, a tradition invented on the occasion of the constitution of the nation-states as an individual and collective attribute of identity. The American star-spangled banner and its rich graphical structure becomes a motif to dismember and restructure in the manner of an unfinished patchwork.

29 PATRICK VAN CAECKENBERGH

Aalst (BE), 1960

Le Dais, 2001

Collection Fonds régional d'art contemporain Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur

Although most folk traditions have progressively lost their symbolic sense to acquire other, more social or tourist meanings, some have been recreated by artists. With *Le Dais*, Patrick Van Caeckenbergh designed the tools for a new procession: a wooden dais supports a "carousel" of Paris frills held by 48 shafts ornamented with a sort of fly agaric mushroom boasting hallucinogen properties... A street fair suggests a party but, a contrario, 24 pairs of slippers seem to figure rest... The work can also be deployed in a procession. The long veil of fabric is strolled through the inhabitants in the city and extends its 75,98 meters, or the exact measurement of a scale used to describe the Universe and the scale reduction visualisation of the milky way. *"The Dai does not honour the Virgin Mary or Saints with its protection, but instead, the men and women who freely accepted to hold a piece of the heaven. The Dai is thus, for the imaginary, but also very tangibly "heaven accessible to all". It probably represents a humble and realisable utopia within one's grasp (...)"**

*COELLIER, Sylvie, 'Pantoufles et falbalas', in : *Prêts à prêter. Acquisitions et rapport d'activités 2000/2004*, Marseille, Frac PACA, 2005, p.171.

30 PASCALE MARTHINE TAYOU

Yaoundé (CMR), 1967

Home Sweet Home, 2011

Courtesy Galleria Continua, San Gimignano - Beijing - Les Moulins

Most of the time, Pascale Marthine Tayou, a Cameroon-born artist living in Gent, creates works using poor, recycled materials brought back from American markets. His vast installations are "sculptural partitions" that have to be reinterpreted by the organisers at every exhibition. He then forces the artwork to renounce to its privileges of "great art" (uniqueness, immutability and demiurgic authority of the artist) to be replayed by others, just like any other popular festivity. Made up of birdcages and "colons" (skinny statuettes of Africans dressed as westerners and produced for the tourist trade), the work questions the protective notion of "House" with its cortège of identity myths: region, country, language, culture, etc. Each of these notions is turned upside down, inverted, suggesting other possibilities or manners of being oneself, "at home".

31 MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ

Belgrade (RS), 1946

Balkan Erotic Epic, 2005

Vidéo, 13'18"

Courtesy of the artist and LIMA, Amsterdam

Originally rural, folk culture is linked to agricultural cycles, and since the dawn of time, Man has tried to woo the forces of nature to ensure the fertility of the soil. Countless pageant rituals persisted, often in folk forms. Artist Marina Abramović, great figure of performance art, thus staged several beliefs and popular sayings originating in the Balkan tradition and associating sexuality and fertility. The "Trivial low", traditionally related to "below the belt" and that cannot be shown, is here exhibited and used to ends of procreation, fertility or protection. Thus shown, the bodies, as they accomplish these ancestral rituals, try to put the rhythm of their life in unity with nature in the aim of re-establishing a vital balance.

Since some explicit images may prove shocking, children may only enter this room under the responsibility of their parents.

32 MICHEL GOUÉRY

Rennes (FR), 1959

La Situation EMPIRE, 2015

Zadig, Axor, Iboga, Bxor, 2008

Courtesy Anne de Villepoix Gallery, Paris

After dedicating a few years to painting, Michel Gouéry turned to ceramics to create a singular formal universe recalling the Grotesque, decorative motifs that put on the same level the living, vegetable and mineral universes. The word "Grotesque" first appeared in the late fifteenth century upon the discovery of decors painted on the walls of buried Roman houses (similar to caves). These strange motifs boast a trivial, decorative exaggeration, and will soon be banned by the artistic tradition from Renaissance to Modernism, encountering great success with the popular classes (ex. the rocailles). From this peripheral position*, Miche Gouéry's contemporary grotesque endlessly parasite today's aesthetic orders, triggering with blatant humour their questioning.

*DELVIGNE, Catherine, '...maniérisme, décoratif, grotesque', in : *L'Envers du Décor. Dimensions décoratives dans l'art du XX^e siècle*. Villeneuve d'Ascq, Musée d'Art Moderne Lille Métropole, 1998-1999.

33 PAULO CLIMACHAUSKA

São Paulo (BR), 1962

But thou read'st white where I read black, 2015

Production in situ BPS22. Courtesy Galeria Leme, São Paulo

Orishas are divinities originate of Africa, more precisely from the Yoruba religious traditions (Western Africa). These divine essence beings represent the forces of nature (water, fire, etc.). They are also venerated in America, where they were imported with the slave trade. For example, we find them in the Brazilian candomblé (a religion of the country) under the name of Orixás. Long forbidden, indigenous or African religions hid under religious syncretism, associating Catholic figures to ancestral divinities. This is the case of Saint Georges, sometimes assimilated to Ogun Ferrailles, a divinity of fire, of steel and of war (patron saint of blacksmiths) or in Orixà, Goddess of the Hunt and Animals. The artist chose Saint Georges as the latter is put aside by the Catholic church, which deemed suspicious the great veneration he enjoyed with indigenous populations. The drawing is associated to the lunar cycle and made using chalk, used in the clandestine religious rituals for its mineral, ephemeral qualities.

34 ERIC VAN HOVE

Guelma (DZ), 1975

D9T (Rachel's Tribute), 2015

Co-production BPS22 and Atelier Eric van Hove. With the help of Hamofa Belgium and Mr Yvan Vanmol. Courtesy of the artist

Eric van Hove spent his childhood in Africa before studying in Brussels. Fascinated by the precision and inventiveness of Moroccan and Indonesian artisans, he reproduced the engine of the famous D9 Caterpillar bulldozer manufactured by a factory in Charleroi. Each of the 300 pieces was made identically using over 400 different materials (various woods, copper, steel, mother-of-pearl, fabrics, etc.), covered with traditional decorative motifs then assembled one by one. Thus shifting artisan production to the artistic field, the artist favours a transfer between social and cultural categories. Like Hamid Irbouh writes: “(...) *References to art and craftsmanship collapse and turn onto themselves, making sculpture the tormented sign of a art form in denial vis-à-vis the official discourse.*”^{*} The bulldozer also evokes the ambiguity of international cooperation. Often used to construction ends, the engine has also had military applications in Israeli colonies and in Vietnam. This work is dedicated to Rachel Corrie, who was crushed over in Gaza in 2003 by a Caterpillar IDF “Teddy Bear” D9 bulldozer equipped with the same engine.

^{*}IRBOUH, Hamid, ‘V12 Laraki / V12 Fulgura’, in: *Eric van Hove. V12 Laraki*, Marrakech, Fendouq Press, 2014, p.58.

35 GABRIELE DI MATTEO

Torre del Greco (IT), 1957

Dal ragazzo che tirò una pietra (Casino), 2015

Dal ragazzo che tirò una pietra (Essere donna), 2015

Dal ragazzo che tirò una pietra (La collera del padre), 2015

BPS22 Production. Courtesy of the artist and the Keitelman Gallery, Brussels

For several years, Gabriele Di Matteo has worked with craftsmen from the Naples region, expert painters of religious images. For this exhibition, he bought three paintings with a heterogeneous aesthetic but virtuoso technique, which were ordered by three different Neapolitan neighbourhoods for the popular procession of Easter Monday. The latter commemorates the memory of a young man who killed himself after finding a bruise on the cheek of the Virgin Mary, which was painted on a canvas on which he had thrown a stone. During the procession, the canvases are placed on frames and decorated with silk ribbons flirting with kitsch, before being walked through the streets by men dancing a choreography. Playing with the religious (processions and other religious rituals) and cultural (prestigious exhibitions to which he takes part) dimensions, the artist turns inside out the very foundations of the art system and aesthetic standards that reign over it.

36 EMILIO LÓPEZ-MENCHERO

Mol (BE), 1960

M. Le Géant, 2007

Hainaut Province production Property of the artist
On deposit at the Maison des Géants, Ath

Since he trained as an architect, Emilio López-Menchero regularly diverted the book by architect Ernst Neufert, *Les Eléments des projets de construction*, one of the bibles of Modernism, to underline its stupidity. Here, the artist focuses on the human figure used in the plans of the architect to transform it into a giant. Inherited from medieval rites, the giants are carried through the streets on festive days. If their physiognomy and size varies, they boast some stylised attributes (facial expressions, clothes, etc.) that identify them, transforming them into symbols of the collective identity of the community where they are carried. Conversely, *M. Le Géant* seems to boast the singularity of not having any. He becomes the cold symbol of a disembodied humanity.

37 DAVID BROGNON & STÉPHANIE ROLLIN

Messancy (BE), 1978 / Luxembourg (LU), 1980

The Agreement, 2015

Vidéo, 10'6"

BPS22 Production. Courtesy Galerie Albert Baronian, Brussels

For several years, this duet of artists has explored the marginal areas of society such as sub-cultures, prison universe, drug practices, etc. *"As the starting point of their work, there are often existing objects that they re appropriate and to which they bring minimalism and mystery whilst maintaining an anchor in reality."** On this occasion, they discovered the schoolyard of Franciscan school Terra Sancta, which leans on the city walls, by crossing the Old City of Jerusalem. In the courtyard, a football pitch was traced on the ground on the available space: the goals do not face each other and one of the teams clearly enjoys a home advantage. The artists met then the children to "correct" this makeshift pitch. From encounter to discussion, from reflection to suggestions, they reactivated the popular tradition of negotiation and adaptation to remodel a terrain, to make it more equitable; just like a metaphor of the country's territorial situation.

*CASIELLES, Nancy, 'IV. David Brognon & Stéphanie Rollin', in: *Addenda*. Hôpital Notre-Dame à La Rose, Les-sines, 2014, p.128.

SALLE DE DÉBALLAGE

-1

38 TAL ISAAC HADAD

Lyon (FR), 1974

Natural Mystic, 2015

BPS22 Production

In this installation, the artist manipulates the objects and practices from popular myths. He gathers whole processes that convey using sound, the manufacture of forms of beliefs. The installation is made up of instruments and combinations of common or popular objects (record-players, stacked painted chairs) inviting the viewer on an immersive experience organised in four sequences. The first sequence offers the misappropriation of two turntables to reproduce the sacred universe of an ashram, inviting spectators on a meditative practice uniting profane and sacred. The three stacked chairs are painted to the colours of Jamaica. Like an empty throne, they are linked to two audio headphones diffusing the tale of Prince Hih Yokshan Makonnen, great-grandson of Haile Selassie I, last Emperor of Ethiopia and designated by the Rastafarian culture as the incarnation of the Messiah (or Jah). A luminous fish bowl lets appear an immersed, moving sculptural form articulating the assembly of a car boomer that oscillates on bass frequencies. Finally, the last sequence presents a reproduction on aluminium sheets of the walls of the speakers of the Brazilian *Car Sonos et d'aparelhagem* (sound systems) used in the northern part of the country by fans of the Techno Braga or Techno Kitsch. This indigenous techno movement has been considered since the 2005s like the pure produce of a poor region, veritable claim to difference. These parts of speakers amplify the metallic resonances of the sounds of the installation.

TO GO FURTHER

THE CONCEPTS

LOW CULTURE – HIGH CULTURE

The history of art is built on borrowing in various ways; borrowing by living artists from their predecessors or contemporaries, from other stylistic schools, from the practices of other social groups, from works from other civilisations, whether near or distant in time or space, etc. Popular culture is one of these reservoirs, from which throughout time some artists have drawn themes, techniques, materials, subjects, modes of operation, behavioural practices, various models of social organisation, to help develop their own artistic research at a given moment.

In literature, Mikhail Bakhtin showed how some writers such as Villon, Montaigne, and especially Rabelais at the end of the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance sought a new source of inspiration and creation in popular language and art. We can also cite Romantic writers (James McPherson is a good example of this) whose interest for popular works developed alongside emerging nationalisms. Similarly, in the field of plastic arts, these back and forth movements between low and high culture never truly stopped. One need only recall the Russian Neo Primitivists (led by Malevich), at the beginning of the 20th century, fascinated by icons and louboks, Slavic popular art prints; British Pop Artist Peter Blake, a great connoisseur of paintings of fairgrounds ⁽¹⁾; including Frantisek Kupka, covering the decorative traditions of Central Europe; or even Picasso whose interest in African tribal art has been abundantly shown, even though the motivations for these artists and the meanings of their actions change depending upon the artistic contexts in which they were produced.

It is important to state that the term “popular culture”, used here, does not include the Anglo Saxon expression “popular culture”, which also means forms of expression from the post-WWII era, mass distributed through information and communication technologies (pop music, film heroes, advertising, etc.) and identified by the expression “pop culture” even though, in French speaking countries, we now prefer the expression “mainstream culture” ⁽²⁾. In the artistic field, Pop Art is clearly the best echo of the influence of this “pop culture”, which, since the 1980s has also become an important cultural background for contemporary art. But this influence, probably too significant to be addressed in one exhibit, is not the subject of the Les Mondes Inversés exhibition.

It must also be clarified that the concept of popular culture includes many ambiguities, and even hoaxes, and has not stopped, since the 18th century, a period during which it was the subject of new interest, experiencing a range of expansions and realignments, produced by the various disciplines involved in it (literature, art history, ethnography, history, etc.). That is why this exhibition, out of a concern for conciseness, understands popular cultures as the sociological distinction between traditions and forms of art unique to the lower classes (low culture), as opposed to forms of art unique to the cultivated elite (high culture). Although at the time, incursions toward a nationalist acceptance of the term “people” were required to establish counterpoints.

In this sociological conception, the term “popular” is the adjective derived from the concept of “people”, which means the lower classes in western society, in opposition to the elites who were the aristocracy and clergy, and then the upper middle class. With the democratisation of society and the appearance, starting in the 20th century, of an ever-expanding middle class (at least until the 1980s), the concept of the people has changed. Nonetheless, it seemed possible to isolate some lasting, specific traits within popular cultures appropriated by the contemporary artists participating in this exhibition.

ETERNAL RENEWAL

Popular art came out of the need that every people has to express itself, communicate with those like it, and above all to survive in the world. Therefore, it has a utilitarian function that is shown in rituals of social cohesion and collective protection that come out of old pagan tradition. Of rural origin, as was most of Western society before the industrial revolution, its symbolic function is to try to domesticate natural elements. Day, night, sun, moon, rain, wind, and snow can profoundly change living conditions of the peasant peoples whose survival depends upon harvests.

A special symbolism stems from this, of which traditions maintain an imprint: that of a necessary renewal. The rhythm of the seasons is therefore the foundational time structure for popular culture as it organises and determines agricultural activities. The succession of natural cycles (day and night, seasons, years, life and death) induces a cultural production determined by repetition, as unchanging as it is necessary. The industrial revolution would disrupt this order by imposing a new organisation of working time, which nonetheless remains one of the salient traits of popular culture, as opposed to “high art” and its claims to eternity.

“HIGH ART”

Until the Middle Ages, “high art” and popular art coexisted and sometimes even mixed if responding to needs, possessions, and resources of distinct social classes. In the Renaissance, a phenomenon unique to the West, the gradual “creation” of Art, occurred: “In fact, the concept of Art appeared in the Renaissance, carried by the brand new idea of progress (...)” and linear evolution⁽³⁾. Art then became the product of the mastery of certain techniques, little by little freed from any utilitarian concern whether religious, economic, ritual, or political, except for its contemplation. To make this contemplative delight function, a new site was required: the museum, which would gradually cut off art from its sacred function to give it an “autonomy” that would continue to be asserted until Modernism⁽⁴⁾.

What was now called “Art” (with a capital “A”) or “high art” or even “high culture” or yet again “legitimate culture” is an art produced by and for the governing minority that seeks to distinguish itself from the popular classes⁽⁵⁾. It is often created from precious and rare but lasting materials since it is intended to stand up over time. It comes out of a knowledge learned from books and transmitted through prestigious intermediaries (the “Masters”) in studios where virtuosity is learned (as opposed to craft). It is no longer a question of producing a usable object with a clear social function likely to be replaced but to last, this time, for eternity. Until recently, only Art was worthy of being studied and transmitted as, in its anthropological function, it is the heritage that a civilisation leaves for future generations.

Thus, in 1868, poet and critic Matthew Arnold wrote that Art is “the best of what humanity has said and thought”⁽⁶⁾, highlighting the idea of aesthetic excellence that distinguishes it from popular works. Art and culture can be summarised as a set of rigorously standardised disciplines; those of which the media still speak today in their “culture” section and that are recognised by Ministries of the same name. This distinction supported by the Enlightenment only extended the will of the Church. In fact, as Christianity spread across all of Europe, it undertook a battle against local ceremonies, beliefs, and customs. While it integrated and assimilated some of them, it vigorously rejected others, which it considered to be “superstitions”. Against popular arts and traditions, the fight by theologians and clerics thus preceded that of the philosophers and enlightened minds.

POPULAR FESTIVALS

The popular festival is a form that marks all human civilisations, to the point that it reflects their conception of the world. Popular festivals have also always had an intense relationship with cyclical time as they correspond to periods of upheaval in the nature, society, and life of humans. The alternation between day and night, the seasons, years, death and resurrection, disappearance and rebirth, is the essential component of the popular festival, which is itself a temporal sequence with a start and end, and which is replayed regularly.

Bakhtin showed how the popular festival seems “*to have built a second world and a second life alongside the official world*”⁽⁷⁾ into which people go temporarily, penetrating into the utopic kingdom of universality, liberty, equality, and abundance. Conversely, official festivals do not pull the people out of the existing order. They only sanction and strengthen the current regime. The official festival, sometimes even counter to its intention, validates the stability, immutability, and continuity of the rules governing the world: hierarchies, values, and religious, political, social, economic, and moral standards.

In opposition to the official festival, Carnaval, an example of the popular festival for Bakhtin (but one might also cite the Roman Saturnalia or Greek Eleutheria), is the triumph of a sort of temporary emancipation from the dominant order, by the symbolic abolition of all hierarchical relationships, privileges, rules, and taboos. It is marked by an “upside down” perspective on things, constant exchanges of the top and bottom, front and back, through the most varied forms of parody and distortion, belittling, profanation, crowning and dethroning of fools. “*The second life, the second world of popular culture,*” concludes Bakhtin, “*is built in a way as a parody of ordinary life as an ‘upside down world.’*”⁽⁸⁾ But at the end of the sanctioned period, things return to order and the world is put back “right side up”.

While developed for the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, this study likely remains relevant into the first half of the 20th century. But what is its relevance today, at a time when the most famous Carnivals have been made official through international institutional recognition (e.g. Intangible Heritage) or have been transformed into tourist attractions by mass communication tools? Can one still speak of popular culture inducing, even temporarily, this symbolic toppling of the dominant order?

This is clearly a complex question that is difficult to answer. However, the exhibition is based on the assumption that popular subversion still exists, but in a more diffuse way, on the margins left by official life. The “world is turned upside down” in a continuous relationship of submission and insubordination with dominant systems; as a form of more or less spontaneous loophole, during which the world order is temporarily stopped. It is a sort of individual or collective micro-revolt, that instils a bit of disorder into what should be ordered. An advantageous overthrowing, in the way in which Raoul Vaneigem recognised the members of his family for having had as their “*only true wealth, the tireless propensity to celebrate for the most wide-ranging reasons*” to find in this the brief and rare moments of freedom that their life offered.⁽⁹⁾

AN “OTHER” PEOPLE

With the emergence of nationalisms and their political realisation in Nation States ⁽¹⁰⁾, a new definition of the word “people” was being forged. The people were no longer a social category; they were now the core of the nation, transcending social groups. If, in the first definition, the people were defined in opposition to the dominant classes, in the second, they incorporate the dominant classes and exclude “foreigners” from the nation this time. It is a nationalist definition of the term that emerged in the 18th century, in a Europe run through by national claims; an era in which writers, men of letters, and scholars would collect popular songs, tales, and legends. It is also a time when the concept of culture expanded to cover the term civilisation and when, by political will, “traditions” were invented to form the identity building rituals of the new States founded on the nation (anthems, flags, etc.) ⁽¹¹⁾.

An artistic aspect of nationalism, Romanticism communicated popular inventories to a wider public and linked the literary debate to national emancipation movements: popular art was definitively re-valued in its literary works. One would have to await the end of the 19th century and the industrial revolution for such great interest to be paid to other types of production. In fact, industrialisation would relegate the artefacts, tools, and techniques of craft production and some seasonal festivals to the past. By disappearing, these popular productions would take on a value as heritage in the eyes of historians and amateurs: that of material testimonials to a civilisation in the process of disappearing, but which must be preserved.

CULTURAL STUDIES

Starting in Britain in the 1950s, intellectuals began to take new interest in the production created by the popular classes. For Edward P. Thompson, Raymond Williams, and Richard Hoggart, culture must be considered in the broad sense, in the wake of Herder, to overthrow the power relationships that are still determined by the values of the dominant classes. For Stuart Hall, they are at the origin of *Cultural Studies*; this term would also encompass American research on communication, media, and information, and gradually lose its political content. This explosion of the disciplinary field contributed to the dilution of the term that would be rapidly employed in general ways.

It is in this theoretical perspective that Stuart Hall's approach, which in a famous article ⁽¹²⁾ proposed a new approach to popular culture. It is now defined by the relationships that it maintains with the dominant culture. *"It is the relations which define "popular culture" in a continuing tension (relationship, influence, and antagonism) with the dominant culture. It is a conception of culture which is polarised around this cultural dialectic. It has at its centre the changing and uneven relations of force which define the field of culture - that is, the question of cultural struggle and its many forms. Its main focus of attention is the relation between culture and questions of hegemony."* ⁽¹³⁾ Thus, popular culture appears as production that maintains complex relations with the dominant culture, in which one is defined in relation to the other, and in which one continually seeks to reshape its territory in relation to the other.

LES MONDES INVERSÉS (THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN)

It is in the wake of this reflection by Stuart Hall that the exhibition was organised as it understands popular culture in its tense relationship with official culture; tense relations to which the artists contribute broadly, drawing from one to act in the other. Entitled *Les Mondes Inversés*, it refers to the British protest ballad *The World Turned Upside Down* (1646), published in reaction to regulation of Christmas festivities, and taken up by British historian Christopher Hill to entitle his study, *Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* ⁽¹⁴⁾. In it, Hill identifies the origins of the revolutionary ideas that would lead to the overthrow of the monarchy and the establishment of democracy, or the overthrow of the old world. One can obviously find the idea of “turning upside down” it, as shown by Bakhtin.

The exhibition is based on a selection of works that contribute to amplifying exchange relations between low and high cultures, through citations, formal, methodological, or conceptual borrowing, or even appropriations. Through each of their works, the artists revive the cultural dialectic at work between these two spheres of activity, each time pointing out challenges specific to their action. But above all, in reviving the cultural dialectic between high and low, these artists continue to produce a symbolic overthrow of a specific dominant order. Thus they pave the way for other possibilities, other organisations, other standards, and for “upside down worlds”.

Thus activated by the dynamic of popular overthrow, these works produce a new “Utopic Kingdom”, that of the space-time of autonomous freedom that their contemplation offers to visitors. Thus the exhibition achieves its goal of being a moment of emancipation and liberation for its visitors, even if ephemeral; a sort of TAZ (temporary autonomous zone), as recommended by Anarchist- Mysticist poet Hakim Bey, “*The TAZ is like an uprising which does not engage directly with the State, a guerrilla operation which liberates an area (of land, of time, of imagination) and then dissolves itself to re-form elsewhere in time or space, before the State can crush it.*” ⁽¹⁵⁾

NOTE

- (1) LIVINGSTONE Marco, *Le Pop Art* (translation : Dominique Le Bourg et Caroline Rivolier), Paris, Hazan, 1990, p. 38-45.
- (2) MARTEL Frédéric. *Culture mainstream. Enquête sur cette culture qui plaît à tout le monde*, Paris, Flammarion, 2010).
- (3) DEBRAY Régis, *Vie et mort de l'Image. Une histoire du regard en Occident*, Paris, Folio, coll. 'Essais', 1992, p. 212.
- (4) KRZYSZTOF Pomian, *Des Saintes reliques à l'art moderne. Venise-Chicago XIII^e-XX^e siècle*, Paris, Gallimard NRF, coll. 'Bibliothèque des Histoires', 2003.
- (5) BOURDIEU Pierre, *La Distinction. Critique sociale du jugement*, Paris, Les Editions de minuit, 1979.
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- (7) BAKHTINE, Mikhaïl, *L'œuvre de François Rabelais et la culture populaire au Moyen Âge et sous la Renaissance*, translation Andrée Robel, Paris, Gallimard, 1970, p.13.
- (8) *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- (9) VANEIGEM, Raoul, *Entre le Deuil du monde et la joie de vivre*, Paris, Verticales, 2008, p.43.
- (10) TELO, Mario, *L'Etat-nation*, Bruxelles, Presses Universitaires de Bruxelles, 1985.
- (11) HOBBSBAWN, Eric, TERENCE, Ranger (dir.), *L'invention de la tradition*, translation Christine Vivier, Paris, Editions Amsterdam - nouvelle édition revue et augmentée, 2012.
- (12) HALL, Stuart, 'Notes sur la Déconstruction du 'populaire'', in : *Identités et Cultures. Politiques des cultural studies*, translation Christophe Jaquet, Paris, Editions Amsterdam, 2007, p.71-78.
- (13) *Ibid.*, p.75.
- (14) HILL, Christopher, *Le Monde à l'Envers. Les Idées radicales au cours de la Révolution anglaise*, translation Simone Chambon et Rachael Ertel, Paris, Payot (Coll. 'Critique de la Politique'), 1977.
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