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Pierre Huyghe: Through a Looking Glass

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1. The Rivoli Float

The exhibition space levitates above the hill-top castle museum like a pop-up picture rising from the flat pages of a book. This airy white float is carried up the hill to the castle by a group of people, where it will rest in the galleries as a softer, more fragile museum architecture, a more open "white cube". The retrospective is celebrated like a Baroque procession.

Working with Pierre Huyghe is an interesting experience, made up of intervals of quiet contemplation, and moments of acceleration and intense focus, spells of acute doubt and inaction, and periods of clarity and decision. There is a rhythm to this process, though it is never standardized, and Huyghe makes little division between leisure and work time. He listens carefully, and shifts his aims in response to the limits of reality. His is a flexible and open process, like free jazz. He is an experimenter.

When Huyghe came to the Castello di Rivoli, he saw an unfinished eighteenth-century castle renovated into a contemporary art museum, its restored frescoed galleries and "neutral" white spaces designed to suit the needs of modern art. The Castello lies twenty minutes from Turin towards France, above the old town of Rivoli, which over the last decades has become continuous with the suburban environment on the outskirts of the sprawling contemporary city. In traditional popular culture, castles are haunted, possessed by the ghosts of past lives. Thus Huyghe's first idea was to create an exhibition that would play out the ambivalent underpinnings connecting the spectacle of today's art-exhibition design with the cinematic and narrative aspects of such architecture - the architecture-meets-entertainment that is no longer typical only of theme-park attractions, but of our contemporary living environment in general.¹

Over time, this initial impulse expanded, incorporating his desire to explore the relationships between inside and outside the institution, the castle on the top of the hill and the life around and below it. This development connected more readily with Huyghe's commitment to celebrating daily experience and to exploring how fiction can generate a new reality, rather than disempowering and alienating individuals in the realm of virtuality.

Huyghe imagined what the boundaries of the Castello would be like if they were more malleable and fragile, more open and reactive to what goes on in the "outside" world, like the "breathing" and reactive architectural projects of his friend and occasional collaborator François Roche.² His retrospective exhibition thus evolved into an articulation of artworks (and recollections of artworks) within a changing paper environment, a folded space of origami and cut-outs, always topologically the same (having the same overall surface), yet infinitely changing its shape in relation to events in real life that would occur outside the museum. This breathing paper environment would be a re-interpretation of the existing space, as well as its ghost.

Even with the help of paper engineers, however, Huyghe found it impossible to translate this model in to a full-sized space without losing either the thin lightness of sheets of paper that he required, or the possibility of making ongoing changes to it. Progressively, his desire for a flexible exhibition/

paper space that could pop up as if out of a book led him to the idea of something even lighter, airier and more fragile: a balloon/parachute emerging from a box - both a metaphor of the space of the museum and a real box in the gallery space, a phantom rising out of the space, like a memory, or perhaps an intention.³

Huyghe's retrospective would not be a stultifying experience of memorialising and monumentalising, presenting one work after another in a succession of galleries. Rather, it would be an occasion for generating experiences and rituals, an event of public festivity, a *mongolfière* (a large balloon able to transport people) recalling the celebrations of modern life that took place in the late eighteenth century and during the nineteenth century, when hot-air balloons would miraculously float through the air, landing in squares or parks.

Huyghe arrived at these shifting conceptions of his project by allowing his thoughts to flow in a *dérive*, rather than through historical or scientific study. The connections and associations between parachutes, balloons and paper, however, are not only poetic ones. Unknowingly, his process runs parallel to the actual history of flight. In 1783, shortly before the French revolution, the Mongolfier brothers, Joseph and Jacques, who were paper-makers near Lyon, invented the *mongolfière*, the first air-borne structure capable of carrying passengers, after observing how hot air could lift paper bags. Soon afterwards, on October 22, 1797, André-Jacques Garnerin performed the first jump with a parachute from a *mongolfière* 700 meters above Paris.⁴ Today, while computer-directed spaceships are photographing the surface of Mars, and when pop-up advertisements are infesting the world wide web in an attempt to divert its connective and intellectual potentiality into a mere marketplace (a form of flight, that has lost its poetic and positive associations) - Huyghe re-enacts (*remakes*, one might say, in his terms) the birth of flight.

He celebrates the imaginary and utopian potential of modernity, including its democratic ability to bring together people of diverse social provenances in the bustling new communities that came into being at its inception. The nineteenth century saw an intriguing relationship developing between balloons, travel, modern optics and the birth of the moving image. Vision from above opened up new perspectives, just as the moving image did. For the Exposition Universelle in Paris of 1900, for example, Grimoin Sanson created one of the first *cinemas*, in which spectators sat at the center of a round room below a large balloon, watching moving pictures, projected onto a circular screen surrounding them, of a journey by *mongolfière* to Nice for a carnival, to Barcelona for a *corrida*, and to Algiers for an Arabian fantasy.

This is not to say that Huyghe disagrees with, or is unaware of, the dismantling of modernity's certainties, and the questioning of its profound contradictions that have come about over the last fifty years of cultural discourse. Quite to the contrary, he begins with those doubts - his admiration for Pier Paolo Pasolini's (1922-1975) dissenting voice, his pre-industrial, agrarian sensibility is an expression of this. He chooses to experiment with ways of joining both "modern" personal agency (the ability to act and create original experience) with what he calls "no-knowledge zones": zones where thinking is initiated, yet no systems of knowledge are ever constituted.

2. Living in the Everyday: An Open Practice

Since the early 1990s, Huyghe has created a body of heterogeneous projects using a variety of techniques and media. His activity is the expression of a mind that explores art in a rigorous yet open way, eschewing inauthenticity, the stereotype and any closed form of interpretation of his art.

He has experimented with different *formats*,⁵ from the exhibition in a gallery or museum to the self-organized collaborative project created with other artists outside traditional institutional boundaries; from the temporary intervention in urban spaces to the creation of a new public holiday; from making a magazine to projecting a film. Sometimes his works can be considered as events. *Casting*

(1995), for example, his first solo show, took place in a gallery space in Milan, where for the duration of the exhibition he cast amateur actors for a subsequent film project called *Les Incivils* (*The Uncivils*, 1995). Similarly, *Mobil TV* (1995) transformed a museum space into an alternative television studio and broadcasting station, an idea that Huyghe repeated with the artist Mélik Ohanian in 1998. Other works are large film-based installations. An example of this is *The Third Memory* (2000), featuring the bank robber John Wojtowicz, whose true story inspired Sidney Lumet's movie *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975) starring Al Pacino, while *Atlantic (Versions Multiples GB/F/D)* (1997) was a triple video-projection juxtaposing the French, English and German versions of Ewald André Dupont's 1929 movie about the sinking of the *Titanic*. Photo/text works form another group within his oeuvre. These include *Chantier permanent* (1993), a collaborative study with Roche of unfinished, informal architecture in Italy, or *Anna Sanders, l'histoire d'un sentiment* (*Anna Sanders, the History of a Sentiment*, 1996) an open script and scenario for a movie yet to be made, created in the form of a magazine in collaboration with friend and artist Philippe Parreno. Complex spatial installations and *mises-en-scène* are another format he has used. *Le Chateau de Turing* (2001) was an articulation, activation and animation of different works, shown in the French Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, while *L'Expédition scintillante. A Musical* (2002) symbolically represented a journey he intended to take, through time-based events such as falling snow and a boat sculpted out of ice that melted during the first days of the show.

Similarly, the issues that Huyghe has explored cover a number of diverse areas. These include the unfinished and forever incomplete construction site as a metaphor for open systems in general; the exhibition as a spectacle where possible new realities can emerge (a script and a set for the playing out of a new form of open allegory); the freedom of non-functional and non-productive actions in the realm of play; the experience of everyday life as a territory of infinite interpretation and possible narratives; the link between fictional subjectivities and characters and our myriad inner selves; and - most importantly - hybrid collective projects.

At first, in order to achieve this lively "openness" of signifiers, Huyghe focused on ongoing processes and infinite interpretations. This is the perspective that lies at the basis of his journey to document unfinished buildings typical of the area south of Rome (which became *Chantier permanent* in 1993). It is also where *Les Incivils*, his partial remake of Pasolini's film *Uccellacci e Uccellini* (*Sparrows and Hawks*, 1965), was shot. And it was what inspired him to create *Silence Score* (1997) and *Le Carillon* (*The Wind Chime*, 1997), two homages to the "open" art of American composer John Cage (1912-92), whose poetics of chance and found reality have a positive resonance in Huyghe's art.⁶

Evident in these works is a recurring desire to introduce pleasure, play and childhood fantasy into the experience of art (areas that have often been repressed by radical artists because they were considered "un-serious"). There is also a subtle impulse in Huyghe's art to constantly consider art as a landscape in which to render manifest the way people can (and do) always react to any form of homogenizing or standardizing attempts to turn them into passive consumers through encouraging the dynamic construction and reconstruction of our everyday lives and rituals. From this perspective, he shares the ideas of anthropologist, sociologist, cultural studies theoretician and priest Michel de Certeau (1925-86), who affirmed that daily life and society are made up of myriad micro-inventions that are created and acted out by normal people, non-specialists and amateurs. These are the tactics, he argued, by which ordinary people escape control, platitude, passivity and standardization in consumer society. Thus it is possible to focus not on the consumption of products but on the different ways of *using* products or of negotiating urban space. The vitality of society lies in this constellation of ordinary activities - a *bricolage* of constantly metamorphosing inventions and anonymous creations - within the dominant culture. Everyday practices such as reading, talking,

dwelling or cooking are means of production but without the creation of capital:

"The activity of reading has all the characteristics of a silent production: the drift across the page, the metamorphosis of the text effected by the wandering eyes of the reader, the improvisation and expectation of meanings inferred from a few words, leaps over written spaces in an ephemeral dance."⁷ Seen in these terms, Huyghe's work is at once totally committed to the aesthetic, and deeply political. It is, however, a politics that does not function as a critique. Rather, it engages in creating an alternative way of conceiving consciousness for the purpose of intellectual, personal and - indirectly - social emancipation. This is consistently manifested both on the level of form and language, and at times also in a very direct way, on the level of explicit content in his works.

One of his most notable early projects, *Dévoler* (1994), consists of two actions, which he documented on videotape. In these ten-second actions - reversals of "demo-ads" shot in supermarkets - Huyghe goes into a store with a bag, from which he removes an object (a tool in the first action, a book in the second), and places it surreptitiously on the shelves of goods on sale. This gesture - which echoes Gordon Matta-Clark's "anarchitectural" artistic and community work on recycling made during the 1970s - demonstratively reverses the cycle of consuming goods, and poetically asserts a form of action that - if widespread - would be truly subversive.

Unsolicited by any art institution or gallery, in this same period Huyghe made his first *Billboard* project, *Chantier Barbès-Rochechouart* (1994). He asked a group of actors to act as though they were real workers on a construction site in Paris, then photographed the site, and posted the image on a billboard in the same location. During the short period in which his poster was visible, before it was pasted over by advertisements, passers-by were confronted with a real scene of workers as well as its representation. It was an *image reliante* (connective image) that had meaning only in terms of its immediate context. Inserting himself in the place where advertisements would normally be located, Huyghe's billboard celebrated the everyday and short-circuited the cycle of exchange of goods, and disrupted the order of representation in public space.

Jean-Charles Massera has noted of these *Billboard* projects dating from the mid-1990s (a late return to this practice was *Club* in 1999) and which took place in various urban locations:

"In a culture that is constantly showing us finished products, there is a need to show work from the point of view of its production (construction). If the imaginary thing that is consumption holds back time that is not concerned with the use or contemplation of a sublimated product, should we conclude that we are surrounded by a world that is only given, a world that does not make anything?"⁸ According to Massera, Huyghe's intervention functions like a "passage that activates the meaning of an image. Here, the representation of the here and now is not constructed in the image but in the relationship that we form with this image; a relationship that constructs the story of our own journey, or rather an interpretation of this journey. The similitude between what is represented in the image and what happens near the image is a *mise en forme* or formulation of the question: who are the interpreters?"⁹ Like *Dévoler*, the later *Blanche-Neige Lucie* (*Snow White Lucie*, 1997) focuses on a form of restitution and reversal of theft. This four-minute documentary film is about Lucie Dolène, who in the 1960s dubbed the voice of Snow White into French for the famous animated movie, and later sued the Disney corporation in order to regain rights over her voice and receive royalties from the distribution of a new version of the movie in the 1990s. In this piece, as in others, Huyghe celebrates a worker in the entertainment industry, by showing how her subjectivity overlaps with that of the fictional character. It is shot on Super-16 transferred to 35 mm and thus eschews the look of a documentary made on video, achieving the resolution and quality more often associated with movies. As in many of his later works, Huyghe reveals the apparatus that is normally just outside the margins of the film, thus under lining both the constructed nature of images, and the opposite: the reality and singularity of the world depicted within them. Rendered

apparent, this world is demystified, no longer awe-inspiring, detached from us, nor invincible. A recording studio is seen from above, accompanied by the noise of machinery. The camera pans down, exposing light fixtures, and finally coming to rest on the figure of a middle-aged woman with permed blonde hair. Her eyes flicker various times to her left, as if waiting for a cue, a device that reveals her human and frail nature. She starts to hum - and then to sing - the song from *Snow White*: "One day my prince will come" in French (*Un jour mon prince viendra*). Our encounter with another voice of hers begins however a few instants before the singing starts, while the camera is still recording the light fixtures, a text has been running along the bottom of the film. A transcript of a monologue in which Dolène expresses her memories, it provides an alternative, inner voice. She recalls singing the songs from *Snow White* as a child at school, and then in the early 1960s auditioning for the lead in the French version. She recalls identifying with the fictional character, *being* Snow White. She goes on to describe her sense of betrayal and disempowerment when she suffered the loss of the rights to her own voice. Huyghe's tender, melancholy work functions polyphonically through disjuncture, by layering Dolène's pleasure in performing her song publicly on screen with the discursive content of her struggle expressed in the subtitles. It is a work that suggests the ambivalence of subjectivity and the multitude of selves that we harbor within ourselves.

Before making *Blanche-Neige Lucie*, in 1994-1995 Huyghe created his first *Remake* - a reworking of Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954) - Huyghe increasingly focused on the notion of invention through transformation and re-interpretation. In his most recent projects, this idea of interpretation has broadened further to signify "intention", "projection", even "anticipation". In the recent *Streamside Day* (2003), for example, the artwork is the enactment of a collaborative proposal to initiate a new custom or tradition, a fresh "origin" for a community that might alter forever the course of public celebrations in a specific location. But from where does this confidence in *agency* and the authenticity of the every day come? Most artists and thinkers in the 1980s had made peace with the notion that we live in a society of simulacra, where signs have taken the place of reality, and all of our actions and lives are predetermined by a prior reality - that of spectacle itself, of which the movies were the epitome. Why then, did Huyghe so radically disagree?

The simple answer might be that those ideas did not correspond with his personal experience. Ever since early childhood, Huyghe had understood the importance of personal action, of making and doing things rather than passively receiving that which is already resolved, of being in the "cockpit". Born in Paris in 1962, he remembers being allowed as a child to sit with his father in the cockpits of the planes he flew for a commercial airline - actually witnessing the lights of Los Angeles from above during a nocturnal landing, rather than simply watching them in *Blade Runner* like most children. As a teenager, he would use free airline tickets to travel round the world. From these early experiences, he learned that cultural constructs are relative, as well as understanding how universal certain aspects of humanity are, how each place articulates emotional "affects" differently, offering infinite interpretations of emotions that nonetheless remain substantially the same.

At this time, Huyghe took part in counter-cultural activist arenas, including anarchic movements and Punk. After graduating from High School, he entered the Ecole des Arts Décoratifs, a school of applied arts, where he was introduced to a variety of practices ranging from video-editing to photography and set design. He began in the early 1980s to be interested in Situationism and public art and some of his early artistic endeavors were done with artist and friend Claude Closky. His first projects took the form of street posters, a form of that he continues to make use of in conjunction with some of his events. After art school, he made contact with other young French artists such as Xavier Veilban, Pierre Joseph, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster and Philippe Parreno, with whom he

has conceived a number of collaborations over the years. Huyghe's dialogs with other artists continued during the 1990s, and are still an important aspect of his work bringing him to share experiences with Liam Gillick and Rirkrit Tiravanija, among others.

In the 1990s, a shift in focus occurred, not only in Huyghe's work but in the field of art in general, from universal truths to an attention to particulars in everyday life. Throughout the twentieth century, artists in the Western art world had mainly explored "essentials and "structures" in painting, sculpture, installation and even photography and Conceptual Art. (Paradoxically, they did this even when making their postmodernist "critiques" of the grand narratives of Modernity - they "critiqued" in a general and absolute fashion.) By the end of the century, however, new artists from all parts of the world such as Huyghe, Gillick and Parreno (or in a different fashion, Tacita Dean, Janet Cardiff, William Kentridge and Francis Alÿs), were looking at micro-events, both within ourselves and in the world at large. This meant moving away from history with a capital "H", towards the more apparently limited and modest notion of the story. They became interested in all the forms through which stories can be told, from literature to film. An exhibition organized by Jean-Marc Prévost in 1998 focused on this narrative impulse in contemporary art:

"Against the closure of the image, a number of artists today are exploring different processes of narration. They use film, television, cultural and other images, which they reorganize in the form of scenarios. Classical narrative is questioned by the central role played by the audience, who must reinvent the possibilities of reading single artworks that are presented together within installations."¹⁰

One of Huyghe's first public solo exhibitions, "L'usage de l'interprète" (*The Use of the Interpreter*), held in 1995 at the FRAC Languedoc Roussillon in Montpellier, featured a two-part event titled *L'Écrivain public* (*The Public Writer*). For this project, he returned to the ancient profession of public writers, who ever since antiquity, and up until to the advent of public education and literacy, would write letters and documents for people. In the first part of this project, Huyghe's "public writer" read newspapers and magazines and reported their content to the artist through a series of letters, written over a two-week period prior to the exhibition's opening. In the second part of the project, she sat at a table and wrote down everything that she could hear and see during the opening of the exhibition:

"The room is already occupied. Occupied? Or rather hired for a few scattered people who hardly dare move around. There is an echo. It is very distinctively lit, clear and warm at the same time. A single wall, the one on the right, level with the staircase, is lit above a series of photographs. A young man, preoccupied, clutch's the banister, alone. Isolated in this part of the room. At this moment the space seems bleak... Silence... A group asks who I am. 'A letter-writer.' Laconically. There really is an echo in this room... 'Come on, we're going to watch the film. Maybe it is about to start,' says the father to the child."

Although he is critical of rational thought, Huyghe's method is not irrational, nor merely self-expressive. Rather, it is a highly focused attempt to keep thought ongoing and meaningful, while constantly avoiding its foreclosure and determination into any body of constituted knowledge. His practice shares both the rigour of his Conceptual predecessors and the appreciation for the sublime and unknowable of lyric poetry.

Like Daniel Buren, (b. 1938) for instance, Huyghe adopts a systemic way of thinking, understanding the art world and wider culture as a system of signs. Buren's recognizable stripe, which he has employed since the 1960s, is an elementary open sign that shifts in meaning according to where it is placed, activating the different contexts where it is located. The character of Annlee, the "empty sign" in *No Ghost Just a Shell* (2000-03), shares affinities with this. It is a collaborative project initiated by Huyghe and Parreno around the life of a *manga* character the artists acquired

from a design company, creating a number of further collaborations as Annlee journeyed from one artist's narrative to another.

Huyghe's poetics of the everyday recalls the practice of Piero Manzoni (1934-1963). Amongst Huyghe's favourite artworks is Manzoni's *Socle du Monde* (*Base of the World*, 1961). This large plinth, inscribed with the upside-down legend 'base of the world', was placed in a park in Denmark. The entire globe, with all its people and events, was thus transformed into a gigantic artwork, resting, in the imagination of the viewer, on this base. Just as Manzoni celebrated a world in constant change and flux, replete with singular activities, people, things and events, so Huyghe creates works with infinite possibilities, where individual usages and micro-stories are celebrated.

Some years after Manzoni, in the late 1960s and continuing into the 70s and 80s, Alighiero Boetti (1940-1994) was creating Arte Povera works that celebrated collective practice and everyday usages, such as his woven *Mappe* (*Maps*, 1971-93), or *Mettere al mondo il mondo* (*To give birth to the world*) (1974) where he asked collaborators to cover an entire sheet of paper with ball-point pen marks.

3. Experiencing the Spectacle

The greatest cultural industry of the twentieth century was film. During this period, the cinema became, alongside the city, a primary public space - a new arena for spectacle. Attracted to the practice of amateurs, as opposed to professionals, Huyghe is interested in walk-ons and stand-ins, the "workers" in the film and entertainment industry. He is also interested in the "real" people behind the public image of actors. This is an industry that has grown vertiginously throughout the twentieth century by trading on our need for emotional stimulation, pleasure and aesthetic experience, and by colonising our interior spaces so pervasively that even the most alert intellectuals have become convinced that original experience is no longer possible in the age of simulacra.

In *Les Incivils*, inspired by *Sparrows and Hawks*, Huyghe experimented with the possibilities of adding reality into and through this peculiar public space that is film. Huyghe has always admired Pasolini for his love of reality and for his belief in amateur experience. Pasolini, like Huyghe, adopted film in a paradoxical way, not in order to explore fiction, but to move away from it. Originally a poet and novelist, he was a self-taught filmmaker who invented his own cinematic language using non-professional actors and on-location shooting, and blending the lyrical and the political, the sacred and the profane, the symbolic and the literal. He expressed this in many ways - from poems written in the local dialect of Friuli (where his mother's family originated), to the full embrace of the lives of the *borgate* (poor outskirts of the city) in his novels and films. Although there is no direct link between the two works, Huyghe's *The Third Memory* (which gives a voice to the actual bank robber who inspired *Dog Day Afternoon*) brings to mind Pasolini's first film *Accattone* (1960), since the central character, the *accattone* (pimp) Vittorio, is given sympathetic treatment, becoming a sort of anti-hero who dies like Christ between two thieves.¹¹ For Pasolini, cinema was a form or "writing with reality." Stemming from this affirmation was Huyghe's decision to extend and reverse Pasolini's poetics, to the point of considering the space of film as a *locus* in which new reality could emerge. In *Les Incivils*, he re-enacted a number of scenes from Pasolini's film, shooting them in their original locations. Rather than just watching the film, he went out with other people and lived new experiences with them, during the shooting, meeting people and walking in the real places Pasolini had been. The film became the origin of new unpredictable life experiences.

In a seminal essay of 1998 about the experimental group show of Huyghe, Gonzalez-Foerster and Parreno at ARC in Paris, developed also in other later texts, the French critic Jean-Christophe

Royoux identified a tendency in the work of these artists that is characterised by a void or an absence that - through the freedom of interpretation it enables - initiates fresh situations and engenders relationships and scenarios for possible new stories, marked by "the folding and unfolding of forms of representation one with another. As if each singular actualization has a meaning only within the genealogy of forms that it inherits and that it transforms." The identifies what might be termed *the empty space of the fold*, which is synonymous with a radical doubt cast over the self-sufficiency of the image. Yet it is this folding and unfolding of intertwined forms of representation that generates repercussions concerning the concepts and forms of the image and the narrative itself. Huyghe's work, he contends: "functions technically and structurally as a succession of transfers and transcriptions that displace notions of the *somewhere* and the *what* of representation. The experience of time is no longer developed according to a narrative chain, but in the serial articulation of each new state of representation. In other words, the experience of the story no longer relies on the recognition of the narrative but on the conscious realisation that the successive interpretations each time reposition the possibility of recognition itself."¹²

Remake constitutes an exemplary "fold" in Huyghe's art. Shot like a home video over a period of two weekends in 1994-1995 with non-professional actors, it uses the same framing and editing as Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window*. Taking up identical positions to those adopted by the actors in the original film, the interpreters repeat Hitchcock's script word for word. But the rear view onto buildings in Hitchcock's original is substituted by a view onto the construction site of an unfinished apartment building. When we watch the new film, we acknowledge the efforts and hesitations of the amateur actors, while our fragmentary recollections of the original overlap with this experience to create a reactivated form of viewing. The fold, the remake, is not a copy, nor a quote; it does not distance us from the original but functions in quite the opposite fashion, placing the viewer in the here and now, in everyday life, in an act that becomes more a form of reading than of viewing.

Huyghe began by opening up apparently closed structures by making *folds* in them, like with his work with film, and later expanded this same outlook to embrace the way he could "fold" exhibition spaces as well.

Although the decade of the 1990s was the age of the video-projection installation, when using this format, Huyghe has in fact been careful to avoid the frontal, passive nature of spectatorship that projections often entail - situations that return to the detached viewing of traditional painting that had been broken open by advanced art since the late 1950s. He did so by keeping the audience alert and active, rendering manifest the process of vision and perception itself. The intention was to make the space of the spectacle not less but even more apparent, blurring linear time through both anticipation and recollection. Thus the viewer was made aware of being in the *real* space of the representation, a *real* theater where each element is both autonomous and interconnected, where fiction is understood as a reality in and of itself.

This incorporation of the imaginary within the real and the continuity between them lies at the basis of many of Huyghe's layouts for exhibitions, including the collaborative project held at the ARC in Paris in 1998 which marked the beginning of such practice. His solo exhibition "Interludes," which took place at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven in early 2001, also furthered this: during the show, at intervals, the lights would turn off and a single lightbulb would turn on, for the time it took to go have a cigarette. When the show "turned on" again, the projected works had switched and were not shown in the same locations - suggesting in the viewers a vertiginous slippage in memory; "Le Château de Turing" at the French Pavilion in Venice in the summer of 2001; his exhibition in Bregenz, "L'Expédition scintillante. A Musical" in 2002; and his recent "Streamside Day Follies," the exhibition at DIA Center for the Arts in 2003, which constituted a portion of the more complex ongoing project, *Streamside Day*, further developed this "staging" and "activating" of the exhibition

as a space of infinite interpretations and possibilities. In each of these presentations, the artist articulated the spaces in ways that reflect on the nature of viewing, the fundamental link between crossing space and moving through time, the art of making connections, recollecting, layering sensual perception with intellectual activity. These exhibitions are interpretations of exhibitions, sites that can produce, once again, added reality. DA QUI

An artist of the 1960s who comes to mind when thinking about Huyghe's art from the perspective of how he constructs the layout of his exhibitions almost as artworks in themselves, is Dan Graham (b. 1938), who explores the vertiginous nature of consciousness, perception and memory, and the spaces of the mind in which the subjective and the social interact and at times clash. His pavilions, transparent/opaque two-way mirror spaces where viewer and viewed overlap, may have played an important formative role in Huyghe's conscious and careful arrangement of elements in his exhibitions which are viewed as a field in which to experiment. For Huyghe, the exhibition is in fact a stage or a play, a *locus* where one can explore the way spectacle works and find ways in which this space of the spectacle is not a place of non-reality, but rather a space of activated experience and reflection for the viewer. Huyghe has also cited Marcel Broodthaers (1924-1976) as an influential figure in this respect, especially his exhibition "Jardin d'hiver" (1974), since it played with and choreographed elements like characters in a play, something that Huyghe would experiment more and more over the years.

When thinking about re-activating the exhibition space as both a theatrical space and a space of reality, Huyghe sometimes refers back to a group exhibition of the late 1980s titled "Bestiarium" This show stemmed from a dialog between Dan Graham and Rudiger Schottle about the formal gardens of Versailles, and it became both an exhibition of works by various artists and a model of models for spaces where viewing might take place. It was held over a period of years in various evolving forms and in different locations.¹³ Recalling a Baroque aesthetic, it was, in spirit:

"a garden, a theatre of theatres, and also a labyrinth. Each of the artworks is a possible place for an imminent event to occur and, taken as a whole, they form yet more places, for another event, which will be the 'Bestiarium'... This is not a group show of individual artworks that one can experience individually, because each work, without the others, suffers from the absence of the signifiers that determined it; but the exhibition, made up of the entire theatre-garden, is nonetheless not a total continuous artwork."¹⁴

Although he is unwilling to cite philosophical references, if prodded Huyghe does occasionally admit to an interest in Gilles Deleuze. In 1988, Deleuze published his book *The Fold. Leibniz and the Baroque*,¹⁵ in which he analyses the Baroque through the writings of Leibniz and notion of the fold. The Baroque is seen as a mode of operation that produces continuous, infinite folds. To fold is to contract and to dilate, to protract and retract, to compress and to expand, but also to envelop and to develop, to involve and to evolve. Matter and spirit are both characterized by folds. Although Deleuze does not mention Heraclitus, in many ways the Baroque view of the irreducible plurality of organisms could be related to Heraclitus' notion of the continuous movement of atoms ("You cannot step in the same river twice"). The Baroque fold is for Deleuze an intrinsic singularity, and an infinite curve. Leibniz's definition of the soul or of subjectivity as a "monad" - a unity that envelops a multiplicity that in turn develops the *one* as a *series*, is described by Deleuze as akin to a contemporary subjectivity that would therefore still be conceivable today in terms of the Baroque, although of a different, more transitory and nomadic nature.

But Deleuze is useful for more than understanding the notion of interpretation as a fold in Huyghe's art. More generally, his interrogation of free will in a world apparently determined by necessity, as well as his Bergsonism, by which every event is singular and in flux, are also relevant. Mostly, it is his notion of the unthinkable nature of the image, which nonetheless initiates thought, that sheds

light on Huyghe's "no-knowledge zones."¹⁶

4. Traditions and customs

In his journey over the years through different formats of experience and communication, exploring in each of them how usage instantiates subjectivity which can be introduced into even the most anonymous structures and systems, Huyghe has addressed architecture, magazines, billboards, television, cinema and museum exhibitions. In each of these environments, he shows how it is possible to be an active agent. One of the most recent formats that he has taken on board is that of folklore and traditions in contemporary society. In the age of globalization, when traditions have become consumer goods, and folklore is communicated in the media either as a product for exchange in the tourist industry or, more disquietingly, as an arena of unchangeable pre-modern rituals that cannot be changed and re-emerge causing division and conflict, as a return of a removed, tribal past that destabilizes contemporary society by triggering destructive violent impulses (even "terrorism"), Huyghe picks up one of his earliest interests - his fascination with grass-roots celebrations in order to explore communal rituals as a *locus* of change, growth and the evolution of society.¹⁷

For *La Toison d'or* (*The Golden Fleece*, 1993), in Dijon, he turned to the story of the late Medieval Order of La Toison d'or (itself inspired by the ancient myth of Jason's quest with the Argonauts to win the Golden Fleece in order to become king). He created a ludic celebration in the park and playground near a shopping center called Toison d'or, which was erected on the site of an earlier theme park of the same name.

The Order of La Toison d'or was a group of wealthy people who would march in an annual procession, thus marking a step in the history of the relationship between spectacle and power at the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Modern Age. Huyghe's *La Toison d'or* suggested the possibility of an alternative event - disengaged from any practical function, in the realm of play. During this informal, festive gathering, children wore large animal-head masks to create a bestiary that evoked childhood desires, fantasies and fairytales. His work proposed that although contemporary society had opened up new markets by transforming public holidays and celebrations, from Christmas to Halloween or Valentine's Day, into products on store shelves, it was possible - just as it had been with film (you could take movies and add on to them, use them as a starting point for something else, just as Lucie Dolène's story forever changed the collective memory of Snow White) - to encourage new realities to emerge in these simulacral spaces.

Again, we are in the realm of *agency*. Is it really true that no new myths, traditions, customs or rituals can be created, since these exclusively originate in the past? After all, legends such as the story of the Trojan Horse or the tale of King Arthur may have sprung from actual events, and their equivalent could happen again today. Must the space of ritual always be defined in terms of the backwards gaze as a form of inanimate repetition? Can the artist initiate the production of a new reality, thus creating a form of art that truly modifies shared space, rather than temporarily occupying it?

From this perspective, Huyghe's thinking coincides with that of the anthropologist Victor Turner (1920- 83), who argued that, in contrast to the traditional view that ritual conserves the *status quo*, it has a role as an agent of social change. It serves to create a sense of community among its participants, reinforcing shared values, while at the same time encouraging experimental exchanges between people. Distancing himself from structural-functionalist anthropology, whereby societies were studied through their crystallized social institutions, Turner's anthropology of experience explored rituals, celebrations and all forms of collective performances as "liminoid" zones, where a rewriting of cultural codes occurs through experimentation and play. Celebrations and their

attendant symbols are interpreted as dynamic vehicles of transformation, in which accepted socio-cultural forms can be remodelled. Rituals and holidays, he argues, are never completely codified because they continuously adapt to new contexts. Societies change and develop through processes of ritualization. Rather than being a space of repetition and consistency: "Ritual is a principal means by which society grows and moves into the future."¹⁸

In 2003, Huyghe turned, in his two-part film *Streamside Day*, to the American sublime and to its myth of Arcadia, in order to create a new tradition for a nascent community in upstate New York, along the Hudson River. Rather than downplaying suburbia as a place of alienation and homogenization, he explored the creative potential within the urge to relocate on the edge of nature in such communities. There is a generosity towards childhood recollections in this work, where the boundaries between nature and culture are rendered malleable, where real forests still exist, and where semi-domesticated animals can walk out of a Bambi cartoon and into real life, if you wait long enough with your camera.

The first part of the film is a fable that tells the story of the migration to the new homes. The second part, shot in a lower resolution, documents the first anniversary celebration of the Streamside community, with its parade, folk songs, mayor's speech, food, children's play and balloon. This celebration is a first "fold" - it repeats the story told in part one, thus initiating what could become a yearly celebration. Huyghe projected the film in a temporary pavilion within Dia:Chelsea in New York. This provisional space was created by the coming together of various moving walls that disappeared when the twenty minute projection had finished, so that the exhibition space continued to ebb and flow, to constitute itself and then return to its original nature - an empty white cube. The ambivalence of structure doubles the ambivalence in the film - both loose and solid, temporary and enclosing, both modeled on the green Emerald City of *The Wizard of Oz*, and reflecting on the Modernist exhibition space. *Streamside Day* is disarming and ambiguous - bearing no clear message and hovering in a liminal zone between melancholy and utopia.

5. Ghosts and liminal zones

Amongst the most riveting artistic projects of recent years is *No Ghost Just a Shell*. In 1999, Huyghe and Parreno bought the rights to a *manga* character from Kworks, a company that designs virtual characters for commercial animations. The artists each created an animation with the character they called Annlee. The idea was not to create a new fiction, but to consider the character as a sign that had been liberated from copyright ownership and that would be able to express its own reality - a sign that they had diverted from the entertainment industry, able to speak about its own condition of "signhood."

The first episodes - Huyghe's *Two Minutes Out of Time* (2000) and Parreno's *Anywhere Out of the World* (2000) - were premiered in two different galleries in Paris on the same day, in what became a disorienting and dislocating experience of authorship and audience *dérive*. Exactly what one had seen in which space and by whom became blurred as the two spectral Annlees haunted the spaces. Huyghe and Parreno then invited a number of artists and other practitioners to add their own version to this story of a deviant sign. In what became a contemporary, multi-authored fable, more and more chapters were appended, with contributions by Gonzalez-Foerster, Gillick, Tiravanija, Pierre Joseph & Mehdi Belhaj Kacem, François Curlet, Mélik Ohanian, Anna-Lèna Vaney, M/M Paris, Joe Scanlan, Lily Fleury, Richard Philips, Henri Barande, and Angela Bulloch & Imke Wagener. The fable ended with the legal transfer of the copyright on Annlee to the character herself, and the celebration of her disappearance with fireworks in December 2002.

In Huyghe's first Annlee episode, the two-part video *Two Minutes out of Time*, a female voice addresses the viewer, who at first stares at an empty screen: "I can imagine you. It's easy. I can see

you, and I can see her." The viewer/artwork relationship is immediately disrupted; one feels observed, vulnerable, watched by an omniscient, invisible narrator. Annlee's silhouette, modelled in 3-D animation, emerges out of a haze on the left of the screen. She resembles a Japanese *manga* character but is more essential, simplified. Her black hair has a blue sheen, reflecting the light cast by a blank computer monitor. The voice continues: "I am looking at an image, facing an imaginary character." Thus, in another reversal, the viewer becomes the fictional character, watched by Annlee. However, if the voice is meant to be hers, this notion is undermined firstly by the fact that her lips are not moving, and secondly because the "she" referred to would seem to apply to Annlee, emphasising her status as a sign: "She is a passerby, an extra." Thus one wonders if it is the voice of a third party, an omniscient narrator, describing the character we are looking at. A further disruption occurs when Annlee eventually opens her mouth, and the same voice speaks: "She says: I've got two minutes, two minutes of your linear time... I'm haunted by your imagination, and that's what I want from you. See, I'm not here for your amusement. You are here for mine'." In part two, the same image of Annlee adopts yet another voice. No longer that of a sign talking about its existence as sign, it is the recorded voice of a girl taped by the artist in the street outside a museum. She describes her first epiphanic experience of art in front of a painting she has just seen. Such slippages of voices, possible points of view and different interpretations occur throughout the two-part video. Annlee is both seductive and disquieting. Like a ghost, we fear her and yet we are intrigued by her. She returns again in Huyghe's second Annlee episode, *One Million Kingdoms* (2001). This time she is a line drawn character eternally walking in what appears to be a moonscape. Here, the audio frequencies of her voice are translated into a visual diagram that resembles peaks and mountains, emerging continuously during her journey.

I am interested in Huyghe because he constantly slips away and explores the hazy boundary zone between the "I" and the "We" - never the clear contrast between the "I" and the "You". This is particularly apparent in his collaborations with other artists on projects ranging from *No Ghost Just a Shell* to his *Association des temps libérés* (*The Freed-Time Association*), an association of artists he founded in 1995. The Association has undertaken a number of activities over the years, and still exists today. It began as a way of extending the participation of the artists in a group show beyond its institutional duration. It transformed their connection into a social reality that would not end when the exhibition did. Even when he creates work by himself, Huyghe is never truly alone - there are always others with whom he is in dialog throughout his projects. At times, "collaboration" or "comunitas" is explored as a body or thought and a subject for discussion. *L'Expédition scintillante. A Musical* (2002), for instance, was a project that he authored solely, but in which he explored his intention to make a collective journey (Six or seven persons/A radio boat navigating outside territorial waters), reminiscent of the community and "alternative group" spirit of pirate offshore radio stations in the 1970s. *Streamside Day* is an example of how "community" can be both a theme in the work, and a practice, since it involved collaboration with various people including a photographer, a singer, draughtsmen and writers.

Over the last decade, the question of collective subjectivity has emerged with a fury in art discourse. This has often been in reaction to the "modern" notion of the individual self (the eighteenth-century Hobbesian bourgeois view of identity as consisting of self-definition through personal biography and private property). This '90s' attitude towards relational art and collective projects - still vital in culture today - retrieved the collective utopias of the 1960s, and emerged out of a profound uneasiness with the cult of authorship and the monumentalization of art objects in the 1980s. This was a decade during which Western art can be thought to have definitively shifted its focus from reflective avant-garde experimental practice to become a self-conscious product of exchange. It was a decade that also saw the evolution of travel into mass tourism, and an acceleration of the

commodification of traditional celebrations.

The "collective" impulse visible in the work of artists such as Rirkrit Tiravanija, or in the "relational art" of French practitioners like Huyghe, Parreno and Gonzalez-Foerster,¹⁹ as well as in much of the curatorial practice of the 1990s,²⁰ runs parallel to an antagonistic attitude towards institutions in general, and art institutions in particular. It suggests a post-Situationist oppositional movement that embraces the "real" and "public space" as opposed to the suspended "white cube"; that points to "heteronomy" as opposed to the "autonomy" of art, and the "daily" and "common" as opposed to the "unique" and "high."

Yet to locate Huyghe only within this arena of a collective "us" is to reduce and simplify his practice. By unconditionally embracing the "us," one does not necessarily succeed in creating a sense of fluid and hybrid subjectivity, a sense of going beyond the impulse to categorize: one could be substituting one clear-cut position with another, thus falling into the same traps and contradictions of patriarchal binary thought that characterized the earlier "I" of modernity.

Each of the artists mentioned above addresses and solves this trap differently. In Huyghe's case, he navigates the Scylla and Charybdis that threaten these waters by avoiding the "I/you" in favor of the "I/we" slippage. This is a predilection that he shares with post-feminist theory, although that field seems never to have been a prevalent part of his thinking. In celebrating the "we," he does not deny the "I." Rather, he expresses a subtler, more permeable and uncertain subjectivity, a changing and fragile subjectivity. It is an "in-between" subjectivity, which moves back and forth between merging with another and separating from it, appearing and reappearing. To achieve this, he adopts a mode of reaction rather than of frontal action. Reaction implies time, the time to experience, and then to look inside oneself and to respond accordingly.

The plural subjectivity Huyghe celebrates is the polyphony of voices within each of us. He approaches this self-in-duration through a time-based strategy. It is a self-in-duration, as if one could take a still photograph of oneself and expand it in time, yet continue to apprehend it as a still, as "myself." The early work *Trajet* (1992) exemplifies this. For this oneiric event, of which Huyghe has also made an offset poster, a man walks on a moving walkway placed inside the back of a truck, whose sides are made of transparent glass. This internal space is lit like a television set. The truck journeys through the city of Paris connecting the man's home to other locations that are significant in his life. He is moving yet standing still because the walkway is going in the opposite direction to that taken by the truck. Since it is unrelated to the direction his body is actually taking, his action of walking is fictional. Yet time itself has not stood still; in terms of temporal duration, this fictional walking is layered over, or folded into, the true duration of his movement through the city.

For the exhibition "Manifesta 2" in 1998, Huyghe presented another haunting work. *Sleeptalking* (1998) consisted of a screening of Andy Warhol's (1928-1987) first film, the six-and-a-half hour *Sleep* (1963), in which Warhol filmed the poet John Giorno sleeping. Huyghe screened Warhol's *Sleep* in one gallery space, while a soundtrack in an adjacent room, divided from the first by a glass wall, played back Huyghe's recording of Giorno's voice describing the dream of the 1960s and the experience of making the film with Warhol. Watching Giorno sleeping through the glass while listening to his voice was like experiencing a voice from another dimension hovering near a ghost from the past.

Huyghe later made a second version of *Sleeptalking*, even more ghostly and oneiric, in which a three minute loop of Giorno in *Sleep* morphs into a contemporary film of him lying in the same position as in the original film, but having aged by forty years.²¹ Time is never standardized, nor linear, in Huyghe's work. It expands and contracts and is highly personal. It goes forwards and backwards simultaneously, instantiating consciousness as inseparable from, and fully intertwining with, perception and memory. In his works, time is inseparable from space - it *is* space. It defines

and is defined by movement.

Amongst the most emblematic works from this perspective is *L'ellipse* (1998). For this triple simultaneous projection, Huyghe asked Bruno Ganz, the actor who played the role of Jonathan Zimmermann in Wim Wenders' *The American Friend* (1977), to "fill in" a temporal ellipsis in the Wenders film by living the events that are implied, but not shown, by the narrative. In Wenders' movie, Ganz's character is seen receiving a phone call and then leaving his apartment. He is on his way to another location, the site of the following scene, where events will determine his future life or death. Huyghe "fills in the gap" between the two scenes by showing Ganz, twenty years older, walking from one location to another. There is something ghostly about this liminal dilating, contracting and layered temporality, as evidenced by the fold between the two differently aged Zimmermanns. Huyghe himself has referred to the work's spectral qualities:

"A ghost is a character from the in-between, trapped on a bridge between two banks, in a suspended time. *L'ellipse* is the story of a ghost who, in actual reality, comes to haunt a gap that is missing in the narrative, one that has been built up in the memory of the spectator."²²

"A second path has been added to a first that leads nowhere" is Huyghe's description of *Or* (1995), a project that consisted of creating a bifurcation in a path on a grassy hill. The beauty of this gesture lies in the uselessness of the secondary path, which mirrors the first; it becomes a double, a fold, the possibility of an alternative or different thought, a ghost of the first. This spatial representation echoes the representation of the uncanny in traditional Gothic literature, where apprehension is awakened in the reader's imagination through hidden passageways, corridors and rooms in and around the architecture of the haunted castle. The gaze that Huyghe brings to bear in his artworks often incorporates this ghostly dimension: we see the world drenched in a special hazy light, fragile and transparent, dissolving and layered. One of the clearest examples of this is the projected work *Les Grands ensembles* (1994-2001), a film of a model of two high rise buildings and their courtyard. The buildings, which enter into a playful yet eerie dialog of lights from their windows, recall the architecture in the area of Paris in which Ganz walks during *L'ellipse*. It is a district characterized by large, anonymous block buildings that mark the failure of twentieth-century utopias. But Huyghe emphasises their beauty: these are ghosts of buildings diverted from their existence as public-housing projects to become animated characters in an environment of constantly changing weather and light.

To each "reality" Huyghe adds the perception of other possible ones, thus avoiding any director unitary view onto any object of representation. In *The Third Memory*, for example, he created a double-screen projected film in which there are many bifurcations. He focuses on the figure of John Wojtowicz, the man whose story of robbing a bank in 1972 became headline news in America, and in 1979 the source for the character played by Al Pacino in *Dog Day Afternoon*. On an almost identical set, which Huyghe had built in film studios near Paris (a "ghost" of the original set, which was itself a "ghost" of the real bank where the original event took place), Wojtowicz and a group of actors re-enacted the robbery. He directed them as a filmmaker might, commenting on the ways in which Lumet's movie omitted aspects that he felt were important, that changed the true "story." Huyghe's epic montage intersperses this *remake* with footage from *Dog Day Afternoon*, as well as with television news footage showing the young Wojtowicz yelling at the police outside the bank.

This "in-between" condition of consciousness, is similar to the spectral experience of the character in Chris Marker's *La jetée* (1962), who attempts a return to the past only to confront his own death in an eternal loop of memory and consciousness. Wojtowicz's identity is a construction based both on his labile memories of what happened to him in real life and the construct of his character in the film. Like the ghost of Hamlet's father, he is a phantom who returns to haunt us and tell us how he feels, how things "really happened," as if it were ever possible, the signified that takes back the

voice of the signifier, the imaginary that speaks as if it were the symbolic - thus speaking an utterance which subverts the symbolic order of society represented by Lumet's movie. Wojtowicz is a ghost that returns like the ghost of Hamlet's father who comes back to tell Hamlet of his assassination in Shakespeare's play.

This indirect and hazy gaze onto subjects viewed as liminal entities in a vague and indefinable light expresses a sense of subjectivity that developed in the late eighteenth century as a radical alternative to the subjectivity proposed by the rationalist currents of the time. It was explored in particular by women writers such as Clara Reeve, Anne Radcliffe and a little later, Jane Austen. In the nineteenth century, Edgar Allan Poe (in particular in his *The Fall of the House of Usher*, 1840) developed the genre that subsequently led to the science fiction and cyberfiction of today. Although at the time considered to be a form of minor literature, to be read by a less "illuminated" community of chambermaids, the Gothic novel - and Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) in particular - can in retrospect be seen as of primary importance in proposing more complex notions of time/space relations and mostly, of subjectivity, which anticipate psychoanalysis, post-feminist theories of what we identify as the complex, connective and relational subjectivities of which we are made up.

Set in 1584, Radcliffe's novel tells the story of Emily, whose journeys through life after the death of her parents lead her to imprisonment in the haunted and terrifying castle of Udolpho. Nothing supernatural actually occurs in the novel; the horrors of Udolpho are generated by Emily's mind. But like the castle itself - filled with infinite mysterious areas to explore - the mind and the imagination emerge as an abyss of possibilities. Poetic language is incorporated into the novelistic, forming a disconcerting textual hybrid, a proto-feminist alternative to the increasingly unromantic world of the Enlightenment.

A ghost is neither completely here, nor gone; it is an in-between figure suspended in a no-knowledge zone, ungraspable by binary modes of thinking. It is real, yet unreal, physical yet metaphysical, neither a body nor a soul; it is intersubjective. It exists in an unearthly, suspended state. It is of a nocturnal dimension. To be able to think of a ghost is to construct a non-thinkable. To evoke or represent ghosts and shadows means to adopt an indirect and oblique gaze onto the world. Both the shadow and the ghost imply disembodied traces rather than direct views onto their subjects. Yet while the shadow depends on gravity for its existence - there cannot be a shadow unless there is an object that blocks the passage of light - a ghost is not bound by any law of physics: it can move through time and space, even through walls, hovering above the castle on the hill. Light can shine through it or emerge from it.

One of Huyghe's most enigmatic artworks of recent years is *L'Expédition scintillante. A Musical. Act 2* (2002). Both material (it is a large light and sound box) and immaterial (it is a hazy colored stage for a concert that never truly occurs if not in the mind), it is an in-between entity as well, with a soothing, although phantasmagoric quality. Beams of pink, purple and orange lights dance to music in this work that eludes analysis except for a purely aesthetic one of form, color, light and movement.

How does one bring all of this together? How does one relate Huyghe's enthusiasm for the everyday, for the construction site, for the extraordinary experience of ordinary life, for a radical liberation of the self from consumer society, for the infinite interpretations and folds of reality that are possible, at every moment - how does one relate this with Huyghe's acute, almost musical, sensibility towards elegance and simplicity of form, form that must be fragile, and light, and soft?

One way, perhaps, is to think about why Huyghe's favourite artist of the Renaissance period is Fra' Giovanni da Fiesole, also known as Beato Angelico (c.1400-55). A monk of the Dominican order, he lived in the community of the Convento di San Marco in Florence, where, amongst many other

works, he painted a scene from the new Testament in each of the monk's cells. This cycle of frescoes, including one of his well-known Annunciations where an angel appears to a seated Mary under a portico, are amongst the most poetic works of the fifteenth century. An in-between figure himself, Fra' Angelico belonged neither to the first generation of Renaissance painters in the early 1400s, like the Masaccio, who had so totally broken with tradition in his portrayal of reality, nor to the mature and flowering Renaissance of the late 1400s and early 1500s of painters such as Botticelli, Mantegna, Michelangelo or Leonardo. He admired the vivid and modern representation of real life that Masaccio had painted in the Cappella Brancacci in Florence, yet his profoundly mystical temper also led him to join this realism with a visionary and spiritual vein. As Giorgio Vasari writes, his figures are "more vague and more beautiful, and more adorned by the ordinary"²³ than those of other artists of his time. He loved all that was simplicity, and he cherished the lives of the humble, which he painted in his religious scenes without drama, in tones of quiet meditation and clarity. Beato Angelico did not use color to cloak the appearance of things, but rather as the substance of space itself, of material sublimated into light. Being deeply emotional, he saw the divine in all things, and manifested this by bathing his figures in light. Beato Angelico lived at a time when a world of certainties was being lost, and new impulses were everywhere. He was one of those artists, like Huyghe today, who believed geometric form and realism were not in antithesis, but rather two sides of the same coin. For Fra' Angelico, and in a lay and contemporary fashion, perhaps also for Huyghe, everything that is created is part of reality, is divine and since the divine is perfect, there follows that reality, too, is perfect, if you look at it from an open perspective, into its folds.

¹ See the many essays by the cultural critic, urban and media historian Norman Klein exploring this topic, and his upcoming *The Vatican to Vegas: The History of Special Effects*, the New Press, New York, 2004. Also see Alison Gingeras, "Pierre Huyghe. Notes sur le travail de l'artiste à l'ère du divertissement", *Art Presse*, no. 269, Paris, June 2001, pp. 22-27.

² Huyghe and Roche have been collaborating since 1993, when they created the project *Chantier permanent*. Later, they devised the unrealized project *Ectoplasm* (2003), and they are currently working together to devise a community center in a new town in up-state New York as part of Huyghe's ongoing *Streamside Day* (initiated in 2003).

³ The association between light, airy structures, utopia and freedom in innovative artistic practice is well-known and long-standing. This history includes Marcel Duchamp's *Air de Paris* (1919) and Lucio Fontana's Spatialist theories. For example, Fontana's *Concetti spaziali* (*Spatial Concepts*), created from the late 1940s, broke open the closed frame and degree-zero of modernist painting to embrace the changes and fluctuations of light and space. Subsequent Zero group projects include the cities in the sky (*Pour une architecture de l'air*, 1958) of Yves Klein and Verner Rühner, Piero Manzoni's *Corpo d'aria* (1959) and numerous inflatables such as Olla Piene's 1965 *Octopus*; Andy Warhol's 1966 *Silver Cloud*; Jeffrey Shaw's 1968 *Airground*; Lygia Clark's *Sculpture vètement*, 1967, or her 1966 *Air and Stone*. More recent works are Philippe Parreno's *No More Reality Batman's Return* (1993) and *Speech Bubbles* (1997); Steve McQueen's video *Prey* (1999), or Tacita Dean's *A Bag of Air* (1995), poetic explorations of flight and lightness. For a partial archive of such projects, see <http://www.airarchives.com/search2/index.php>.

⁴ It was November 17... This attempt was made possible thanks to the intuition of two brothers, Joseph Michel (1740-1810) and Jacques Etienne Mongolfier (1745-99), the owners of a paper factory in Annonay, near Lyon. They observed the ascensional force of smoke and noticed that paper bags placed above the fire began to rise. The next step was evident; if one could make an envelope that was sufficiently big and lightweight, able to contain enough of what the Mongolfier brothers thought was a gas, it could rise into the sky. The first experiment, made by Etienne Mongolfier in Avignon in September 1782, proved that his intuition was correct. Other experiments were undertaken, with ever bigger models, culminating in the construction of a cloth and paper balloon (10 meters in diameter). This was tried out on June 4, 1783, in the Annonay marketplace, where a large fire of wool and straw to fill the envelope with hot air had been lit. The balloon, which acquired its name - the Mongolfière - on this day, rose up to about 2000 meters. Thrilled by this success, the Mongolfier brothers went to Paris and built a new balloon, of even greater size. With this flying structure, on September 19, 1783, the first flight in history was undertaken, even though the passengers were a goose, a sheep and a rooster. The flight took place in Versailles before King Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette, the court and a crowd of over 130,000 people. It lasted about eight minutes and the balloon travelled approximately three kilometers. Two months later, another balloon built by Mongolfier, Pilatre de Rozier and the Marquis of Arlandes flew with these three men. They thus entered into the history of aviation as the first people to achieve flight (from: <http://membres.lycos.fr/avya87/mongol.html>)

⁵ Huyghe uses the French term *format* to define an acknowledged and codified system of communication.

⁶ This notion of infinite readings and the openness of the artwork was a shared idea in postwar art up to the art in the 1980s, and was explored in Umberto Eco's *Opera Aperta* as early as 1962, where he describes the artwork as an open system in which the experience of the work is flexible and constantly renewable.

⁷ See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1984. Originally published as *L'invention du quotidien. 1. Arts de faire*, Paris, UGE, 1980.

⁸ Jean-Charles Massera, *Amours, gloire et CAC 40*, Paris, P.O.L., 1999, p. 329.

⁹ J.-C. Massera, *ibid.*, p. 323.

¹⁰ From the press release of "La terre est ronde - nouvelle narration", Musée Départemental d'Art Contemporain de Rochechouart, July 3 September 27, 1998.

¹¹ Yet another point of connection between the way in which Pasolini and Huyghe blur the boundary between real and fiction can be found in Pasolini's "meta-cinema" *La Ricotta* (1963, his contribution to the collective film *RoGoPaG*, for which Roberto Rossellini, Jean Luc Godard, and Ugo Gregoretti also contributed episodes). Here, Orson Welles plays the role of a director who is shooting a film about the life of Christ in which the actor playing one of the thieves actually dies on the cross in the film after the actor eats an excessive amount of ricotta cheese off the set.

¹² J.-C. Royoux, "Dans les plis de la représentation », in *Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Pierre Huyghe, Philippe Parreno*, Muse d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1998, p. 64. J.-C. Royoux, "Visual Syntax in the Work of Pierre Huyghe", *Afterall*, no. 0, London, 1998-99, pp. 95-96.

¹³ Stemming from Rüdiger Schottle's ideas about the relationship between formal gardens, vision, theaters and exhibitions, "Bestiarium" began as a model made out of sugar shown in Munich and Saint Etienne from 1987-88, and then developed into a large-scale exhibition in New York, Seville and Poitiers in 1989. Artists such as Dan Graham, Rodney Graham, Jeff Wall, Juan Muñoz and James Coleman created works for this exhibition which was also a model for an exhibition, a projection into the future folded into a recollection of the past.

¹⁴ C. Christov-Bakargiev, "Bestiarium," in F. Migayrou (ed.), *Bestiarium Jardin-Théâtre*, Entrepot-Galerie du Confort Moderne, Poitiers, 1989, pp. 9-13 (catalog).

¹⁵ G. Deleuze, *Le Pli. Leibniz et le Baroque*, Les Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1988.

¹⁶ See G. Deleuze, *Cinéma 2. L'image-temps*, Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1985. Michel Foucault's well-known analysis of systems of knowledge as systems of power is also shared by Huyghe.

¹⁷ Various recent studies by anthropologists and sociologists such as Jean Cuisinier and Piercarlo Grimaldi have pointed out how popular traditions, holidays and rituals, rather than continuing to decrease with the growth of cities as they had since the end of World War II, have interestingly been spontaneously revived in many parts of the world, and are on the rise once again, perhaps in reaction to a sense of lost identity within complex, globalized societies.

¹⁸ V. Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, p. 298.

¹⁹ Critically framed in France by Nicolas Bourriaud.

²⁰ The experimental work of curators such as Hou Hanru and Hans Ulrich Obrist, like "Utopia Station" (a collaborative project organized for the Venice Biennale 2003 by Obrist and Molly Nesbit) or "Zone of Urgency" (organized by Hou Hanru for the same Biennale).

²¹ In another work also based on morphing a character, *Nine Perfect Minutes* (2000), Huyghe tore out a page from a magazine and created a short digital video in which the figure in the still photograph seems to breathe. His intention was to introduce temporal duration into a fixed image, just as paintings might come to life in Gothic literature. This is the reverse of a filmic impulse, where viewing still images at 24frames per second provides the illusion of movement. The work suggests alternative, and irrational forms of experiencing time and space.

²² P. Huyghe. *L'ellipse*, edited by Maria Ramos, Museu de arte Contemporanea de Serralves, Porto, 1998, n.p.

²³ Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani, da Cimabue, insino a' tempi nostri*, Einaudi, 1986, p. 344 [1st edition 1550].