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Spaces of Wonder: Animation and Museology

"Space is now not just where things happen; things make space happen."
Brian O'Doherty: Inside the White Cube – The Ideology of the Gallery Space, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1999, page 39[i]

The days that animation was the guilty pleasure of a limited group of cinephiles and discreet art devotees are over. Finally? What is at stake when animation leaves behind the limited confines of the cinema screen to surface in the white cube or a museum wing? Purists may consider the new, warm embrace by the art world as a suffocating gesture. What is the compensation for – on average – a serious loss of projection quality and an intense, collective experience? From a historical point of view however, there are several good reasons to argue that animation does belong to the exhibition space, and that the development of animation as an artistic practice actually precedes the cinema with at least three centuries, starting already with the magic lantern. From its origins, animation can be understood both as a method (a technology) and as a metaphor (a strategy for provoking interpretation). From the earliest days of museology, via the modernist white cube and the ubiquity of electronic images in the digital era, there is the recurring ambition to turn the site of an exhibition into a 'space of wonder,' an actualization of the historic *Wunderkammer* (curiosity chamber), where the visitor is positioned in a dynamic constellation that plays with the parameters of time and space. Yet the practical manifestations of animation in the field of visual art often manifest a rather different, more derivative character.

Introduction: Animating Art Spaces

Since a number of short films by William Kentridge were selected in documenta X in 1997, his career took a decisive turn and the doors of major galleries, musea, art festivals and even operas opened. This example soon was followed by younger artists, although with often less thematic richness or formal ingenuity. Since the turn of the

[i] Brian O'Doherty, Inside the White Cube – The Ideology of the Gallery Space, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1999, page 39.

century the gallery world is being besieged by a new generation of assertive animation artists; and also big public institutions are opening themselves up to the legacy of animation. From PS1's *Animations* (New York, 2001) to Drawing Room's *Shudder* (London, 2010) and from *Il était une fois Disney* at the Grand Palais (Paris, 2006), to the prestigious world tour of *Pixar, 20 Years of Animation* starting from the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (with a stop at the New York Museum of Modern Art, 2006): this sudden upsurge of interest can hardly be coincidental.

From an art critical point of view, animation's popularity may be understood as an extension of the art world's recent reappraisal of craftsmanship and inclination towards design. To this, animation brings along its own set of questions about the status of the artifact, the dynamics of drawing and the allure of materiality (plasticine, inked cels etc.) In this era of ubiquitous digital reproduction technologies, the question of hardware and physical manifestation obviously plays a role. As Lev Manovich observes: "Today, while outside one finds LCD and PDA, data projectors and DV cameras, inside a museum we may expect to find slide projectors, 16 mm film equipment, 3/4-inch video decks."(2006, 14) Yet, it is unlikely that so many musea would turn themselves into safety havens for obsolete media out of a strict concern for technological conservation.

The intervention of different media technologies in the relationship between viewer and screen(s) in the art space has become a common practice. Artists and musea no longer simply offer the viewer something to look at, but place him or her inside a space that incites exploration. The question now poses itself to what extent the practice of animation brings in its own set of 'problems' or paradigms, and whether these are really new, or rather practices rooted in the past. To determine the actual relevance of animation (as confirmed by so many contemporary exhibitions), it is important to retrace the evolution of museological display. The example of some emblematic artists here under consideration brings to the surface a parallel history of animation. Each of these artists has developed a distinct practice that can be called animation beyond animation, a way of presenting images that ties in with the tradition of animation before the history cinema even started. More than purely a filmic practice, animation thus needs to be understood as the staging of an agency: the manipulation and interpretation of intervals, not only between film frames, but also

between images and objects in space. As with the earliest optical toys, the animated image can only occur thanks to physical action and physiological response, always mediated by the observer.

This concept of agency, combined with notions such as scripted spaces (Norman Klein), devices of wonder (Barbara Maria Stafford) and the evolutive concept of the white cube (Brian O'Doherty), is essential when trying to grasp different manifestations of animation in the context of the *Wunderkammer*, the magic lantern performance, early avant-garde animation, kinetic art, structuralist cinema and digital animation. From a media-archaeological approach (re-interpreting the past in the light of the present, with a healthy disregard of the notion of history as progress)[ii] the topicality of animation appears symptomatic of an even larger development in visual culture and what is now best described as data culture (comprising all sorts of text-, sound and image based manipulations of electronic information). Animation is currently no longer understood as a subset of film history, but rather the inverse: as technically older as well as culturally more significant for our media-saturated society.

Yet it is often anachronistic, handcrafted animation that is cultivated by artists for its particular aura. While the range of electronic media is expanding at incredible speed, a conversion to 'old fashioned' animation (or sometimes just an electronic emulation of it) can thus be understood as the desire of young artists to tap into a tradition on their own (technically often quite naive) terms. Crude Plasticine creatures, rudimentary silhouettes, the soberness of a simple felt pen or some straightforward graffiti marks: Nathalie Djurberg, Kara Walker, David Shrigley and Robin Rhode are successful examples of artists who revive techniques and strategies that often go back to the earliest days of animation film. Whatever their style, these artists all embed their short film works in installations. The unavoidable curatorial question – whether or how to present linear works as permanent loops – again ties in with the genealogy of animation, before the advent of cinema. With on the one hand the magic lantern and on the other the thaumatrope, a linear and a looped mode of display already was in place long before the filmstrip occurred. Mary Ann Doane situates such a dialectic

[ii] For a general introduction in this field, see *Media Archeology – Approaches, Applications and Implications*, Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka (eds.), University of California Press, Berkeley, 2011, and Jussi Parikka: *What is Media Archaeology?* Polity Press, Cambridge, 2012.

in a variation on this opposition: "It could be said that the cinema, immaterial product of a beam of light, is haunted by optical toys; by the miniature, touchable, manipulable, opaque image."(Doane 2009, 152)

The most distinctive feature in comparison with live action cinema is that animation is above all the art of producing, not re-producing time. But when discussing animation within the domain of visual art, the main question to be addressed is how this manifestation of an autonomous time-regime is stored and then released again in a given space. What is animation, other than film? Time taking place? Where can animation take place? Where does animation exist, if not on film? This inevitably leads to questions about scenography. "Any narrative, object, relationship or action has to be or take place somewhere," Suzanne Buchan writes in the catalog to her *Spacetricks* exhibition, co-curated with Andres Janser for the Museum of Design Zurich (2005, 6). Buchan underlines that animation film "has the unique quality to create spaces that have little in common with our lived experience of the world: in animation, there is a preference for presenting fantastic, invented and often impossible places" (6). Yet how can this characteristic be retained in the realm of actual space? How can an exhibition on animation signify more than a comment on the actual film, like an extra on a DVD? It is not because Disney auctions their animation cels as autonomous artworks, that this effectively implies an artistic relevance for the pro-filmic material to exist next to a finished film. Obviously, art history offers legitimate arguments to value a sketch as much as a finished piece, and to promote an artifact as art 'after the fact.' But when dealing with spatial effects, then the agency of the architecture of the exhibition room needs to be addressed as well, since exhibition space always has been an important marker of meaning for modern art. How does the artwork 'function' in the space, how does its manifestation make sense?

A good example of the challenge, intricate to this question of the spatialization of a time-based medium, was the *Watch Me Move: The Animation Show* exhibition (The Barbican Art Gallery, London, 2011). Clearly, the organizers wrestled with the problem of how to equate artistic integrity with the integral viewing of so many canonic titles. With its ambition to introduce a wide-ranging selection from the history of animation to a broader audience, it allowed the audience to move freely from one projection to another. Only one intermediary space showed objects rather

than moving images: a quite random mix of antique optical toys, vintage merchandise and contemporary artworks. There was also a room where film-fragments and clips from TV series were projected on two huge, opposing surfaces. Emphasis however clearly lay on the narrative short film, presented either in modules for straightforward viewing, or in stylized, designed spaces. The earliest historical examples in this film-museological trajectory were to be found on screens floating freely in space, surrounded by suggestive, semi-transparent curtains of loose black threads. The idea was perhaps to return the visitor to a viewing situation before the nickelodeon, when the cinema was just one among many attractions on a fairground. However, instead of rivaling for attention with the live attractions in a historical amusement park, here the screens seemed to be competing among each other. The cacophonous collage of so many films led to some incongruous combinations, such as the Quay Brothers' *In Absentia* (2000) sandwiched between a *Jurassic Park* clip (Steven Spielberg, 1993) and William Kentridge's *Shadow Procession (1999)*. *Watch Me Move* was an exhibition with many key figures present, but the intervals between them did not provoke an interesting dynamic. A fundamental concept in the technique of animation is the 'key-frame,' a crucial position of a figure. The in-betweener is then the one who fills in the necessary intermediary steps of that figure to complete its movements. In the case of an exhibition, one could consider the artist or curator the one who determines the key-frames, inviting the visitor to do the 'in-betweening.'

Traditionally, in the museum the visitor is free to move among images that are static; in the movie theatre it is the opposite. And although the eyes are free to scan the screen, there is no control over the order of the images and the duration of the observation. This fundamental difference in freedom of movement of body and mind is allowing the museum visitor to bridge the gaps between the works according to his or her own tempo, in other words: to choose one's own key-frames, to animate *en passant* the intervals and to determine the duration of the visual experience. To look at art in a cinematographic way was the explicit premise of Philippe-Alain Michaud with his 2006 Pompidou exhibition *Le Mouvement des Images*. In the catalogue, he writes:

> Nowadays, at the dawn of the 21st century, while we are witnessing a massive migration of images in motion from screening rooms to exhibition spaces, a

> migration borne along by the digital revolution and prepared by a twofold phenomenon of dematerialization of works plus a return to theatricality of the art scene, it becomes possible, not to say necessary, to redefine the cinema beyond the experimental conditions which governed it in the 20th-century- that is to say, no longer from the limited viewpoint of film history, but, at the crossroads of live spectacle and visual art, from a viewpoint expanded to encompass a general history of representation. (2006:16)

Matching modern art to the model of cinema (instead of vice versa), and recognizing a posteriori how a paradigm can already be operative long before it is recognized as such: this is also applicable to the praxis of animation. Focusing on four sets of artistic practices, the following text puts to the fore a range of curatorial approaches. What these artists essentially have in common is that they all 'think out of the (black) box', not only by demonstrating an expanded notion of animation and engaging in a dialogue with their surrounding setting, but also through a resolute destabilization of the space around their work, thereby according a central role to the viewer. Although clearly distinct from each other, each case consciously engages in a museological discourse, linking the notion of animation to either a historical, a modernist or a post-modern notion of museum practice. From wandering around the installation work of the Brothers Quay, grounded in the pre-modern history of museology (the peep box and diorama), we shift to the white cube surroundings of Robert Breer's revolutionary yet discrete kinetic sculptures, moving on to the disorienting, multi-disciplinary manifestations of 'Annlee' (an avatar temporarily owned by Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno), to end up standing in middle of a *Line Describing a Cone* - the famous expanded cinema piece by Anthony McCall. The way these artists have conceptualized their work around the notion of animation as a method and/or a metaphor, provides a useful context to develop some more general insights on the potential of animation for the contemporary exhibition space.

Keyframe One: Animating History (the Brothers Quay)

The bristling curiosity cabinet is the spectacular embodiment of the ancient, force-filled microcosm and the modern, 'chaotic' cosmos. (...) When opened, the geometry of the chest's structure dissolves, its multimedia fragments spilling into adjacent spaces.

(Stafford 2001, 2-3)

Since they combined their anamorphic fairy tale excursion of *The Comb* (- *From the Museums of Sleep)*, 1990) with a more explanatory, but no less suggestive documentary on the same phenomenon of visual distortion (*De Artificialia Perspectiva – or Anamorphosis*, 1991), the Brothers Quay have continued to warp the distinction between filmic and museum spaces through a string of commissioned films in which they explore particular collections, typically approaching these through the eyes of a solitary, night-time visitor in a *Wunderkammer*.[iii] These recent documentaries are no less anamorphic in the sense that each is made from a radically singular viewpoint, and rather mystifies than elucidates. Like their painting predecessors from the mannerist epoch, the Brothers Quay systematically build in disorienting signals as ironic commentaries on the notion of 'true vision.' In 1997, they started applying this approach to installation-work and objects for the museum space, involving the visitor in a carefully choreographed interplay between objects and sightlines.

Before musea became clearly defined spaces and canonized artworks were aligned to become a frame of reference, the 17th century *Wunderkammer* was a demonstrative place, where the heterogeneity of a collection was matched with the curiosity of the privileged guest. The whole space functioned like the optical toys of the 19th century (also called 'devices of wonder'): as a playground for experimentation. With the gradual consolidation of the museum model, the proximity and active involvement of the visitor within these semi-scientific spaces was traded against accessibility for larger audiences. As a consequence (Therefore), the objects on display were no longer kept within reach, but presented either framed or in vitrines. This led to the classic paradigm of all musea: to conserve in order to display, aimed at a purely visual decoding of artworks and artifacts.

By putting things in a room or in a box, musea became instruments to direct our gaze. Confining the space around objects created a systematic focus, and the format of presentation became increasingly systematized. In the course of the twentieth century, the convention of the white cube became the guiding principle to exhibit

[iii] These commissioned museum-films comprise *The Phantom Museum - Random Forays Into the Vaults of Sir Henry Wellcome's Medical Collection* (2003) and more recently *Inventorium of Traces* (2009) on Jan Potocki's Castle at Lancut-Poland, and *Through the Weeping Glass – on the Consolations of Life Everlasting - Limbos and Afterbreezes in the Mütter Museum* (2011), shot at The College of Physicians, Philadelphia.

contemporary art: "Unshadowed, white, clean, artificial, the space is devoted to the technology of aesthetics." (O'Doherty 1999, 15) With his influential essay *Inside the White Cube* Brian O'Doherty famously demonstrated how the history of modern art correlates with changes in that space and the way we position ourselves within. Already in 1976, he observed "We have now reached a point where we see not the art but the space first". (O'Doherty, 14) Not only did the actual objects on display become secondary to a narrative of spatial experience of the interior. Since the Seventies, attention has also increasingly shifted towards the exterior of the building, the experience of the space outside the museum, as epitomized by the so-called Bilbao-effect: all over the world, the most reputed architects are solicited to turn musea into optical boxes of a gigantic dimension.

Everything begins with mobilizing the individual viewer, a technique Norman Klein calls "scripting space"(2004: 2). In his book *The Vatican to Vegas: A History of Special Effects* Klein describes a variety of public spaces that are scripted such that the spectator assumes the position of a central character in an imaginary story. The script Klein alludes to is not a literal, but a visual one. He demonstrates how the parameters of film production have their roots in Baroque culture:

> By 1620, technology to support a kind of 'cinema' was in place: much finer lenses, theatrical lighting, mirrored projectors to bounce an image from place to place; manuals on geometric systems, from math to mapmaking, to building "chariots" for actors to ascend or descend. "Camera" then amounted to a "cinematic" room. The room ran movies of a kind. The movies relied on convergence. Optical, sculptural, and theatrical illusion were squeezed inside the same space. (61)

The contemporary dialectic between animation, cinema and the museum thus has its roots in the mid 17th century, when the principle of the camera obscura was inverted and the first magic lantern slides were projected.[iv] And as the evolution of the optical toy in the early 19th century illustrates, the manifestation of animated images as an autonomous art ran parallel with the elaboration of visual strategies within the newly developing format of the autonomous exhibition space (as opposed to the private

[iv] The French historian Laurent Manoni gave his 2009 catalogue exhibition and publication *Lanterne Magique et Film Peint* the subtitle "400 ans de cinéma," arguing that cinema started already in the 17th century.

collection).[v] For Klein the prototypical notion of animation, as a manifestation of spatialized special effects, is first and foremost an architectural phenomenon. Stafford on the other hand, allows the viewer (or user) a much freer position. He or she is less the object of immersion, and more an autonomous subject, investigating from the outset a view of the outside world on a reduced scale. In her essay *Revealing Technologies / Magical Domains*, she describes how, long before there was a museum setting as such, the mutable *Wunderschrank* (curiosity cabinet) already invited a "sensory structuring of common experience" (Stafford 2001, 11). For her exhibition *Devices of Wonder – From the World in a Box to Images on a Screen* (2001), she significantly shifted the focus from the traditional museological marker of the *Kammer* (chamber) to the *Kabinet* (cabinet*),* linking these 16th, 17th, and 18th century contraptions even further back to the tradition of the *memory theaters*: "The *Wunderschrank* belongs to a whole gamut of hollow furnishings awaiting the incorporation of far-fetched contents that rely on the user for activation" (Stafford 2001, 7). As the discriminating choices between big projection and small monitors in the *Watch Me Move* exhibition clearly demonstrated, this dynamic tension between the space and its contents, and the experience of different scales (from looking up to big rooms to looking down into small cases) is still a major concern in contemporary exhibition design.

Loplop's Nest

This interplay between the agency of the visitor and the seductive coercion of an exhibition space (the tension between freedom of movement and the fixed, unique vantage point that allows to decode an anamorphic image) is precisely a central motif in the work the Brothers Quay. Despite their fairytale-like figures and decors, they intrinsically make experimental films, confusing the viewer with a disorienting frenzy of audio-visual impulses. The problematization of a strictly visual translation of the sensation of space and the tactile sense has been a crucial concern in all their work. Their favorite lead character is a passive *flâneur* roaming Benjaminian passages, just like the visitor of a historical panorama who is both free to move, yet unable to really grasp the image. On some occasions: they conceive their 'dramatis personae' much

[v] For an evolutionary of the museum interior, see Charlotte Klonk's *Spaces of Experience – Art Gallery Interiors from 1800 to 2000*, Yale University Press, 2009.

like a secret nighttime museum visitor, transgressing the rule not to touch.[vi]

Never 'just' filmmakers, the Brothers Quay always induce a sense of calligraphy in their typographies, book covers, stage designs, exhibitions and theatrical *mise-en-scène*, prolonging curvaceous traces in the sets and props through the choreographed gestures and trajectories of their protagonists. [vii] In opposition to the standard visual grammar of narrative film, their camera never transcends itself to place the viewer in the position of an ideal and unseen witness. It rather operates as a participating character on the set. Within an installation space however, this becomes a matter of choreographing the gaze of the viewer rather than that of a camera.

One of the most widely seen projects by the Brothers Quay as installation has been *Dormitorium.*[viii] In 2006, they began exhibiting the miniature sets of their films as a configuration of two dozens small dioramas. The impact of this ensemble has frequently been compared to a curiosity cabinet. In their non-linear configuration, filling a whole exhibition space, the status of the ensemble of the 'sleeping' *Dormitorium* sets transcends that of a presentation of original profilmic objects. Behind glass, the collaged still lives lose their documentary character, and become Joseph Cornell-like boxes.

Since the opening scène of *Street of Crocodiles* at least, the Brothers Quay have cultivated a fascination for visual contraptions that require an active approach by the viewer, in the lineage of peep shows and optical boxes. When the caretaker of a dilapidated theatre triggers an automaton by spitting some saliva into a wooden 'oesophagus' – resembling a mutated version of an Edison mutoscope – the film liberates its central character to follow his desire for sensory experiences. Transposing the logic of their cinematographic universe into actual space, the Brothers Quay lure their visitor into a similarly extrapolated optical device, where movement is free and yet steered by spatial guidelines. In the first installments of *Dormitorium*, filling a complete exhibition space, the visitor was already obliged to

[vi] For one museum film that never materialized the Brothers Quay took their cue from a Balthus painting: *The Card Players* (collection museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam). The script of this film was published under the title 'Nightwatch' in *Conjunctions 46. Selected Subversions: Essays on the World at Large.* New York: Bard College, 2006.
[vii] The first major retrospective of the Quay Brothers' works, *On Deciphering the Pharmacist's Prescription for Lip-reading Puppets*, was held at MoMA, New York, August 12 2012 – January 2, 2013.
[viii] The *Dormitorium* project was originally produced in Amsterdam by the Holland Festival in 2006. It was co-produced by and reprised during the International Film Festival of Rotterdam in 2007, before it started to travel, in varying constellations.

choose at the entrance between starting from the left or the right side. The trajectory through the presentation was explicitly non-linear, thus immediately raising an awareness of ambulation in space. In their installations, they inverse the restrained frenzy of their animated films (rhythmic movements of the camera, elliptic editing, and a hypnotizing flicker) into a threatening calm. Yet in both configurations, the viewer becomes part of the optical mechanism and is instrumentalised to activate the space, to become the animator of curved lines, dead objects or still frames.

This was already the case with their first autonomous museum project, the mysterious optical box *Loplop's Nest (*1997). This anachronistic *Wunderkabinet* functioned as both a deconstruction and a reconstruction of their short film *Rehearsals for Extinct Anatomies* (1988), combining glimpses of visual motifs of their film with mystifying text signs as surrealist intertitles.[ix] To grasp what was inside *Loplop's Nest*, one had to bend one's knees, stand on one's toes, and walk around the box. Confronted with a dozen lenses and viewfinders that abstract rather than actually reveal the inner sanctum of this incongruous piece of furniture (a large scale wooden chest on a pedestal), it was up to the viewer to imagine what was lurking inside, to move from peephole to peephole and mentally animate the intervals between the glimpsed insights. Or as Stafford describes the interaction with *Loplop's* historical predecessors: "The cosmos as displayed in the *Kunstkammer* was not so much a static tableau to be contemplated as it was a drama of possible relationships to be explored." (Stafford 2001, 6)

Whereas in the particular case of the Brothers Quay the interest in peepshows may be linked to their fascination for miniature universes and puppet theatre, the reconsideration of early formats of optical entertainment and visual display has meanwhile become a wider phenomenon. Precisely around the time when digital media and wearable gadgets like smartphones and global positioning systems started to alter our perception of space and distance, musea showed a renewed interest in the archeology of optical contraptions. In most of these exhibitions, the relationship with contemporary art is made explicit or at least alluded to. They imply a continuity that

[ix] For a well-illustrated documentation on this – now lost – object, see my essay 'Crossing Parallels,' published in the artist's magazine COIL 9/10 (Proboscis, London, 2000). The titles added to each peephole suggested an entirely different kind of narrative, as for instance: Everyday Gardening; At the Edge of this Forest the Text is Waiting ; The Interior of Sight ; Loplop's Speech – in front of a Magnetized Epidermis ; The Pull of the North (formerly) Travelers' into the Total ; Up Yours – the Illustrious Forger of Dreams, etc.

has run parallel with the development of the museum concept: from the magic lantern to avant-garde cinema and from the peep box to contemporary mixed media art. But rarely do these illustrations move from the comparative to the conceptual level, in a way that Marcel Duchamp already demonstrated early on in the 20th century.[x] Wittier than most of his successors in contemporary art, Duchamp understood why optical toys historically had been considered at once as philosophical toys, and were applied both as a method (for visual effects) and a metaphor (for the relativity of sight).[xi] Indeed, when modernity first peaked in the Twenties, avant-garde artists were anachronistically accentuating the legacy of popular contraptions that produce visual stimuli, and post-war modern art would continue to do so in various guises and *–isms*. This 'traditional' frame of reference persisted even within modernity's most prominent innovation to our perception and understanding of modern art: the white cube.

Keyframe Two: Animating Modernity (Robert Breer)

> "A small local feast, an object defined by its movement and which does not exist except through it, a flower which fades the moment it stops, a pure play of movement just as there are pure plays of light."[xii]

In the mid Fifties, a young American in Paris made the move from abstract painting to producing animated films, flipbooks and mutoscopes. Robert Breer orbited around the Galerie Denise René, and even had the opportunity to invite Marcel Duchamp for a studio visit. "Very nice, but don't you think they're a bit too fast?" was his first reaction when Breer showed him his early films.[xiii] The most explosive one of them (*Recreation*, 1956) was aimed at the least possible feeling of continuity, presenting with nearly each frame an entirely different image. Prior to this meeting, both artists were included in *Le Mouvement*, the notorious show that in April 1955 claimed kinetic art as a collective movement and launched the careers of Victor Vasarely, Jesús Rafael Soto, Pol Bury and others. Alexander Calder and Duchamp were included to ground the show in the historical avant-garde. In hindsight, the importance of this configuration of artists proved to be a key moment for conceptually expanding the presentation of the animated image and its expansion into the gallery

[x] Culminating with his *La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même (The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass,* 1915-1923), leading to his final revelation: the room-sized peep-box *Étant donnés: 1° la chute d'eau, 2° le gaz d'éclairage . . . (Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas . . .*, 1946-66*)*

[xi] Rodney Graham is a positive example of a contemporary artist who consistently refers to the simile prototypes of visual contraptions in his work.

[xii] Sartre's definition of a mobile: in Jean-Paul Sartre: Situations III, Editions Gallimard, Paris, 1949. p. 37

[xiii] Cited in Robert Breer: Interview on the Occasion of the Exhibition 'Le Mouvement' from Cinema to Kinetics, in the catalogue *Le Mouvement – vom Kino zur Kinetik*, Museum Tinguely, Basel, 2010, p. 149.

space. Breer was contributing rather discretely with 'just' a flipbook. Yet historically this *Image par Images* is arguably the first folioscope to be commissioned by a gallery as a valid medium for contemporary art, elevating a century old optical toy into the realm of modernity. From then on Breer continued throughout his career to alternate between filmmaking and constructing kinetic objects and sculptures, without any hierarchical distinction.

The discussion on the definition of kinetic art (at the time still referred to as *dynamism* by Denise René[xiv]) still resonates. How to deal with art that needs to be put in motion by the visitor? Is the mobility of the visitor in the gallery also part of the kinetic aesthetic? Do the mechanics of kinetic art also comprise cinema? Or vice versa: can cinema, including animation, be considered as a substrand of motorized, kinetic art? In 1955 a yellow handout was released at the occasion of *Le Mouvement*, but behind this collective stance – positing that color, light, movement, and time would form the foundation for the future development of kinetic art – there was a multitude of rivaling notions, even among the main organizers of the show (Vasarely, Hultén, René). Roger Bordier, the author of the so-called 'Yellow Manifesto' (*Manifeste Jaune 1955)*, even suggested to put theater, dance and Baroque light shows in the category of kinetic art. (Bordier 2010, 9)

Motorized minimalism

After this first momentum of kinetic art, various other 'movements' followed, such as Op Art and the widely publicized, touring exhibition *The Responsive Eye* (MoMA, New York, 1965). In the mid-sixties, Robert Breer created several abstract geometric sculptures that, when reproduced on photographs, are completely in tune with the distilled, stripped down aesthetics of minimalism, then also dominating the art discourse. As with a typical Carl Andre or Robert Morris sculpture, the visitor is free to walk around or along Breer's sober, geometric constructions. However, their essential characteristic is that they hide a motor inside, which allows the sculptures to move extremely slowly across the floor, thus adding a particularly subtle *coup de théâtre* once the visitor notices the changed positions of the works. Their motorized, usually hardly perceptible displacement endows Breer's pieces with an extra sensation

[xiv] See Roland Wetzel: Einleitung, in the catalogue *Le Mouvement – vom Kino zur Kinetik*, Museum Tinguely, Basel, 2010, p. 7.

of the passage of time and destabilizes the white cube's apparent neutrality.[xv] His modernist looking mono-volumes (*Floats*, or *creepies*, as he called them generically) often carry titles that provoke ironic connotations. Discarding the pedestal to let the sculptures explore the ground surface of the gallery meant opening up a democratic dialogue between viewer and artwork: "This changes the role of the viewer completely from the one assigned to him in front of an immovable statue or, in fact, in front of a kinetic work. Not only do the viewers stand – because of the missing pedestal – on the same level as the work, but the artwork also competes for their (living-)space" (Holl 2011, 102). Breer's strategy has always been one of balancing between complementary positions. Combining systemization with unpredictability, he has produced all types of animated art, from hyperfast films to extremely slow sculptures, challenging the viewer to use his or her feet to explore them in full detail, thus allowing them a sense of agency.

Throughout a career spanning five decades, Breer has consistently adapted 'primitive' animation formats such as the mutoscope, the folioscope, the stereoscope and the diorama to his own absurdist logic. In the last period of his career, his subversion of the space extended from objects in the room to motorized clouds on the ceiling, to the experience of the wall itself. His *Panoramas* are wall-mounted objects made from multi-layered cut-outs in wood, that incite the viewer to walk closely along a film-less film in order to 'activate' it by mentally joining all the glimpses visible through holes in his oblong construction. Breer also added a life-size section of a white cube to his ensemble of *Floats*. Imperceptibly his *Floating Wall* (2009) lurks on the gallery visitor, the mobile white wall continuously altering space and perspective, and adding an sense of composition in time to the space. The effect is not merely visual but also directly physical. The 'impurity' of Breer's approach is clearly intent on a physical, not a purely optical experience. His kinetic works always addressed an embodied viewer. Always focused on the experience of movement as an autonomous value, not limited to a particular medium, Breer chose never to adhere to any particular art movement but preferred, as already apparent in the group show of 1955, the position of an active bystander.

[xv] O'Doherty's argument goes precisely against this apparent neutrality: "If the white wall cannot be summarily dismissed, it can be understood. This knowledge changes the white wall, since its content is composed of mental projections based on unexposed assumptions." *Inside the White Cube* 1999, op. cit. p. 80.

As the inclusion of Duchamp's motor-driven *Rotary Demisphere* (1925) in *Le Mouvement* already made clear, the history of animation cannot be dissociated from larger developments within twentieth century avant-garde art, just as the genealogy of the museum, the parallel evolution of both architectural and technological strategies of visualization and presentation is part of the history of animation. Prolonging the legacy of optical toys to critically engage with what he dismissed as 'retinal art' was a consistently recurring strategy in the oeuvre of Duchamp. In 1926, Duchamp continued his exploration of impossible dimensions in animation with his film *Anémic Cinéma*. When in the Twenties the feature film industry absorbed animation as a subgenre within its serial production process, the intrinsic methodology behind animation at the same time lay at the foundations of experimental cinema. It was adapted on the one hand to provoke or even subvert the conventional art circuit; on the other hand, it also allowed to expand on abstract painting. Through Surrealism, but also Bauhaus, and Constructivism: animation was always part of the equation in terms of avant-garde strategies. Robert Breer's work is to a large extent indebted to the abstract and conceptual avant-gardes of the 1920s, that critically explored notions of space and time, already taking into account the physiology of the viewer.

And yet, many art movements later, regardless profound technological developments, the white cube remains the prevailing format to present contemporary art. In the era of electronic spheres and virtual space, the empty environment of the white cube is still offering opportunity to reflect upon (and commodify) artist's responses to culturally important dynamics and processes. In parallel with the popularity of animation and devices of wonder in the museum world, the historical examples of kinetic and optical art are currently given prominence again, after many decades of gathering dust in the darkness of storage spaces.[xvi] From programming the agency of a machine to composing a space for the viewer to respond to, in our set of examples the focus thus shifts from the object, to the space, to the interval or in-between, and finally to explore the manifestation of agency as such.

[xvi] One of the first symptoms of renewed interest was the exhibition *Force Fields- Phases of the Kinetic* (Hayward Gallery, 2000). Some examples of more recent exhibitions: *Movement in a Square (The Square in Painting, Kinetic Art and Animation, Stuttgart 2006*); *Op Art (Frankfurt, 2007)*; *Sons et Lumière (Pompidou, Paris 2004); Lye exhibitions at the Australian Centre of the Moving Image (Melbourne) and at the Ikon Gallery (Birmingham). Since 2006 Breer has had solo shows in Annecy, Rotterdam, Bordeaux, Norwich, Basel and was prominently featured in Artforum in the November issue of 2010.*

Keyframe Three: Animating Postmodernity (Parreno, Huyghe and 'Annlee')

> "Installation art can be used as a barometer for the historical relationship between avant-garde art and the museum."[xvii]

In the era of social media and non-stop upgrades of audiovisual applications, the art of the moving image is understood in a much wider sense, and hence within a much longer tradition. Film and media classes converge, history books are rewritten and in the musea the oldest and newest technologies complement each other. William Kentridge had already started expanding his vocabulary in 2004 with his own interpretations of antiquated optical devices such as anamorphic mirrors, phenakisticopes and stereographs, or even as early as 1999 if we consider his *Shadow Procession* to be an automated form of *ombres chinoises.* Through exhibition titles such as *Seeing Double* (2008) and *What We See & What We Know* (2010), it is obvious that Kentridge intentionally problematizes the notion of perception. His main theme however remains the evocation of lived memory, history and the inner life. In combination with his style of graphics, the impact of referring to outdated technology is often quite literally a trigger for nostalgic effect. Artists like The Brothers Quay, Robert Breer or Philippe Parreno make use of optical contraptions, but, unlike Kentridge, less to deal with history than with the experience of time in the actual 'now', the interpretation of the interval, the distance between the image and the eye, the lived moment. Understanding animation as an aesthetic strategy to produce a different and yet physiologically experienced time regime, the crux of the process lies in the interplay between consecutive images or frames, bridging a difference at each step. In animation jargon: it is a question of in-betweening, filling in the gaps between two key frames.

Animating the museum

Philippe Parreno pushes this principle to the extreme, producing with each exhibition a temporary autonomous zone that comes with its own parameters of time and space. On a small scale for instance, he invites visitors to come back day after day to the same gallery to be able to observe minute changes or variations of a large cell-drawing on a light box (e.g. *What Do You Believe, Your Eyes or My Words?*

[xvii] Julie H. Reiss: From Margin to Center – the Spaces of Installation, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1999, p XV.

Speaking Drawing, 2007).[xviii] On a larger scale, as with his first retrospective *Alien Seasons* (Musée de l'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 2002) he scripts an entire museum space to follow a temporal partition, linking all components of the exhibition to each other, so the visitor appears to walk through a filmic montage. An even more radical play with intervals was his recent retrospective 'suite,' that interrelated Zürich (Kunsthalle, 2009), Paris (Centre Pompidou, 2009), Dublin (Irish Museum of Modern Art, 2009–10) and New York (Bard College, 2009-10). Only those who could add up all four locations (or key-frames) got the complete picture.

Treating the exhibition as a medium in its own right, Parreno systematically explores and expands its possibilities as an integral 'object' rather than as a collection of individual works. *The in-between* (2003) is also the title of a book on Anne Sanders Films, the production company around Parreno, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Charles de Meaux, and Pierre Huyghe. This is also the 'studio' that has facilitated the collective *film d'imaginaire* project *No Ghost Just a Shell* (1999-2002) centered around a fictive character 'Annlee'. Referencing the classic 1995 anime film *Ghost in the Shell* (Mamoru Oshii, 1991), in 1999 Philippe Parreno and Pierre Huyghe acquired the copyright for a graphic figure called 'Annlee' and her original image from the Japanese manga agency Kworks. 'Annlee' was not expensive, as she had no particular qualities, and so she would have disappeared from the Anime scene very quickly. The duo then offered 'Annlee' free of charge to a series of artists, to be used for their own stories. Fifteen participants gave ‘Annlee’ two dozen different emanations.[xix] Each artist shaped a new chapter in 'Annlee's' non-linear history, complicating her existence as an empty sign, as well as complicating their own oeuvre with only a small segment of a collective project. After three years, Huyghe and Parreno formally (even legally) transferred the 'Annlee' copyright back to 'Annlee' 'herself'. To end the project the artists staged a disappearance in the sky through the mise-en-scène of a firework (*A Smile Without a Cat*, Art Basel fair, Miami, 2002). And still 'Annlee' is not fully allowed an afterlife of her own, as she was sold to the Van Abbemuseum (Eindhoven), where the entire ensemble of *No Ghost Just a Shell* found a permanent depository, allegedly the first group show to be bought in all its

[xviii] For an insightful comment on Speaking Drawing: . . . (2007) and other works by Parreno: see Verina Gfader's " Nervous Light Planes" in *animation: an interdisciplinary journal,* July 2008, Vol. 3, n° 2, Sage Publications. pp. 147-16

[xix] Henri Barande, Francois Curlet, Liam Gillick, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Pierre Huyghe, Pierre Joseph with Mehdi Belhaj-Kacem, M/M (Mathias Augustyniak and Michael Amzalag), Melik Ohanian, Philippe Parreno, Richard Phillips, Joe Scanlan, Rirkrit Tiravanija and Anna-Léna Vaney all (re-)animated ‘Annlee'.

heterogeneous integrity by a museum. Comprising both a series of animated video works, posters, a neon drawing, a wooden sculpture, a book and even a painting, this constellation defies any simple categorization, posing again an avant-gardist challenge to the museum, albeit it with playful acceptance. The artist duo even conceived of a robot that follows a programmed pattern, moving about the wide white space like a kinetic sculpture to project the films on varying segments of the walls.

Manifestly a multi-media artwork, *No Ghost Just a Shell* does make sense to experience in small, individual portions, as long as conceptually the sense of an ensemble is kept in mind. The ideal presentation, according to the artists, would have been a simultaneous manifestation in as many different cities as there are pieces to show, forcing the viewer to bridge serious distances in order to mentally complete a picture. At once practicing and questioning ubiquity, network structures, globalization and disintegration, the most flagrant paradox remains that the readymade commodity 'Annlee' was never exploited as merchandise (T-shirts, stickers etc.), as is normally the case with Disney, Pixar or any similar enterprise. If anything, 'Annlee' was called into animated existence to militate for the principle of multiplication of the same as a form of difference.

Augmented animation

The rhetorical question remains why Parreno and Huyghe did not dismiss the tension between the real and the art world altogether. They could have just as well conceived their whole project for the context of the internet instead. Technically, they were too early to come up with a solution like Chris Marker did for his online retrospective *Ouvroir* (2008), virtually opening up to the world via the online MMORGPG Second Life.[xx] And yet, already in 1999 both architecture and avatars were also being constructed using the same keyboard and with similar algorithms. It was likely that Parreno and Huyghe's motivation was that this would not raise the same level of phenomenological doubt as when experiencing displacement in a physical 'space of wonder,' where the viewer can actively partake in the animation of real intervals. As Lev Manovich concludes when he describes the shift from virtual reality (without ties to the physical world) towards the opposite, a hybrid, augmented experience within

[xx] Acronym for 'massively multiplayer online role-playing game'.

reality itself: "I suggest that the design of electronically augmented space can be approached as an architectural problem. In other words, architects along with artists can take the next logical step to consider the "invisible" space of electronic data flows as substance rather than just a void – something that needs a structure, a politics, and a poetics." (2006, 237)

From introducing their film language in a museum context (Brothers Quay) to transcoding the museum as a filmic experience (Breer), to mediating reality by artistic means (Parreno/Huyghe): the question always revolves around the configuration of space, technology and the embodied gaze. Whereas animation can dispose of film as well as the screen as mediators for its inventive language of artificial time, it cannot do without any wider technological framework, a visual configuration, a viewing device. From the earliest optical toys before the cinema, to the animated applications of the multi-media era, a viewing experience always happens in a particular spatial constellation and involves an interaction with technology. This staging of agency implies a string of museological codes and conventions that are explicitly confronted by the individual artists here under consideration, but that have also been critically addressed in a more structural way, at the time when artists approached avant-garde film, animation and installation art on a more explicitly analytical, even theoretical level.

Keyframe Four: Animating Light in Space (Anthony McCall)

"A house that has been experienced is not an inert box. Inhabited space transcends geometrical space"[xxi]

Every artist craves for an accommodating context for his work, because only then can it come into existence: in the eye of a public, an individual viewer first of all. More than any other visual medium, animation always depends on this participation of the observer to link the individual frames together. And this time-based experience needs to be located. No matter how inventive a new generation of media artists' works is, embracing both the language and legacy of animation as a natural part of their artistic vocabulary, most still address their works with this other, architectural machine of

[xxi] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space,* Beacon Press, Massachusetts, 1994, p 47. Originally published in 1958 as *La Poétique de l'Espace* by Presses Universitaires de France.

vision in mind: the gallery or museum. It is this realm of authority, which turns their creations into 'apparitions'. Jean-Louis Déotte suggests "The museum is the type of institution that has the power to reveal a novel object; the work of art, a new subject: the aesthetic subject, and a new relationship between the two: disinterested contemplation."[xxii] (2011, 10) The basic script for a museum is to create space around time; it is a time machine where different eras and centuries share the same spatial coordinates, a place where things are put in a historical perspective, scripted by the powers that be.

The emergence of the museum as a public spectacle at the end of the 18th century coincided with the introduction of the first animated multi-media entertainment in the audiovisual arts. In 1793, the Louvre opened its doors to the general public; in 1797, Etienne-Gaspard Robertson started with his *fantasmagories*, which he advertised as *résurrections à la carte*. In an abandoned Capucine convent near the Place Vendôme in Paris, he scripted the space with an innovative audiovisual mix that is now considered a form of expanded cinema *avant la lettre*, and thus laid the foundations of our contemporary hybrid and highly immersive multimedia culture.[xxiii] With death – and the guillotine – as his main source of inspiration (it was the aftermath of the French Revolution), he offered the citizens an opportunity to bring back their beloved lost ones by projecting familiar faces on a curtain of smoke during theatrical, heavily ritualized performances. There was a strong sense of interaction and the experience of the moving image surpassed the boundaries of the screen, as magic lanterns were either hidden behind a translucent screen, or carried around the room to project from unexpected angles. Laurent Manoni stresses the innovative use of a magic lantern on wheels: "This invention transformed the frame, perspective and scenic space of the projection. The traditional procession of images, used since Huygens' time, was abandoned: now animated figures cross the screen in all directions, loomed up from the base of the screen, came towards the viewer at an astonishing speed, and then disappeared suddenly. The combination of the movable lantern and the moving slide were an essential step forward in the history of 'moving' projection."(Manoni 2000, 141) Almost exactly one hundred years before the notorious Lumière film of an

[xxii] "Le musée est cette institution qui a la puissance de faire apparaître un nouvel objet; l'oeuvre d'art, un nouveau sujet: le sujet esthétique, et une nouvelle relation entre les deux: la contemplation désintéressée." (my translation.) Déotte argues that the museum is a site for free aesthetic experience, not ideological subjugation.
[xxiii] See for instance Oliver Grau: "Remember the Phantasmagoria! Illusion Politics of the Eighteenth Century and Its Multimedial Afterlife", in MediaArtHistories, Oliver Grau (ed.), MIT Press, Cambridge, 2007, p 137- 161.

arrival of a train at the Ciotat station was presented to a panicking public, Robertson already proved the impressive dynamic of a moving image, seemingly coming straight towards the audience.

Para-cinema

Since the original *fantasmagoria,* animating images through projection on a dynamic, ephemeral fog screen was not developed much further until in 1973, when Anthony McCall wanted to show a white dot of projected light slowly growing into a (nearly) complete circle on a black background. He used a rostrum camera[xxiv] to make the resolutely minimalist animation *Line Describing a Cone*, which he presented on a freestanding 16mm-projector in the middle of a gallery space. Instead of using a screen McCall filled the empty space with circulating smoke, originally coming from tobacco or incense. Conceived as a solid light sculpture, the viewer gradually sees a delineated cone of light, hanging in midair and modulating the space around it. As Philippe Alain-Michaud summarizes:

> The displacement of emphasis from the projected image toward the projection phenomenon results in the following: the geometricalization of space: the gallery's homogenous and omnidirectional space replaces the cinema's heterogeneous space, formed as it is by different, qualitatively distinct place (screen, theater, projection booth)." (2011, 13)

And as this animated 'sculpture' is transversing the whole space the viewer cannot but interact. The cone of light provokes the agency of the viewer: to experience the cone, one is even invited to walk through the projected light beam and stare into the projector.

At the time, McCall (whose visual vocabulary also includes real flames, large pencil drawings and time-based actions of 24 hours) was one of many artists who represented the Structuralist film movement, deconstructing the medium into bare essentials, such as movement, light, wavelengths, mechanics and optics. Individual parameters of the cinema were isolated and thematized in what Ken Jacobs in 1969 coined as *para-cinema*. (Pierson 2011, 11) Jacobs himself revived the praxis of the magic lantern performance, projecting or rather animating a film strip frame by frame,

[xxiv] Belonging to experimental animator George Griffin.

by manipulating the interaction between the filmstrip and the shutter. A host of experimental filmmakers in the Sixties and Seventies started to analyze the *dispositif* of cinema even before theorists focused on 'apparatus theory,' the same way and around the same time as for instance the artist Marcel Broodthaers demonstrated his institutional critique before it became an academic discipline.[xxv] "If the white wall cannot be summarily dismissed, it can be understood. This knowledge changes the white wall, since its content is composed of mental projections based on unexposed assumptions." (O'Doherty, 1999, 80)

In the mid Seventies, around the time O'Doherty was formulating his critique on the white cube, a different terminology was introduced by Jean-Louis Baudry to discuss the technology and the operations necessary to produce the cinematic effect in the viewer, and thus to induce subjectivity: the 'basic apparatus' and the '*dispositif*.'[xxvi] With the former, he indicated the technological constellation of the film stock, the camera, the editing process and the screening conditions. He understood the untranslatable term '*dispositif*' as the immaterial effect of the work of the cinematic apparatus, pointing at the 'agency' of both the machine and the ideologies that steer them: the screening conditions that situate the subject. This critical approach of the conditions of film viewing were developed further and varied upon by other post-structuralist thinkers (notably Gilles Deleuze and Jean-François Lyotard), and then transposed to the electronic moving image (by for instance Raymond Bellour and Serge Daney). But it was Michel Foucault who immediately demonstrated a much wider potential for concept of the *dispositif*, to talk about subjectification in both visual and architectural arrangements.[xxvii] Foucault also addressed the institutions of cinema and the museum, among many other isolated, parallel places that he labeled with the term 'heterotopias': non-hegemonic places were different timeframes are juxtaposed and the experience of space is illusory. (Foucault 1984, 46-49) Neither here nor there, they form a space of otherness.

[xxv] Broodthaers frequently addressed the *dispositif* of the cinema as well, and made at least one animated film: *Une seconde d'éternité* - MB, La signature ou une seconde d'eternité d´après une idée de Charles Baudelaire, 1970. See Marcel Broodthaers Cinéma, Fondacio Antoni Tapiès, Barcelona, 1997.

[xxvi] French philosopher Jean-Louis Baudry developed this concept in his two essays, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematic Apparatus" (1970) and "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema" (1975), which became hallmarks of so-called "apparatus theory." First publications: Jean-Louis Baudry, "Effets idéologiques produits par l'appareil de base," *Cinéthique*, no. 7-8, 1970, pp. 1-8. And Jean-Louis Baudry, "Le *dispositif*: approches métapsychologiques de l'impression de réalité," *Communications*, no. 23, 1975, pp. 56-72.

[xxvii] Foucault first uses the term in *Histoire de la sexualité. Vol I*: La Volonté de savoir (Paris: Gallimard, *1976*) and explains it in "The Confession of the Flesh" (1977) interview. In *Power/Knowledge Selected Interviews and Other Writings* (ed. Colin Gordon), 1980: pp. 194-228.

Thirty years later, a multitude of new media is pervading our audiovisual culture and thus making up new kinds of *dispositifs* and producing new subjectivities. Meanwhile, a next generation is discovering anew *Line Describing a Cone* in comprehensive thematic exhibitions on the legacy of the moving image, either in New York, (*Into the Light: the Projected Image in American Art 1964-1977*, 2001) or London (*Eyes, Lies, Illusions*, 2004) or Berlin (*Beyond Cinema: the Art of Projection, 2006.)* After the 90s wave of artists' cinema, a revival of the historical expanded cinema followed, and McCall's animated circle became one of the most celebrated pieces. However, the critical, ideological examination of *dispositif* and the historical nature of aesthetic judgment is no longer the bias. The emphasis now lies on the purely aesthetic exploration of the perceptual field of cinema, expanded to the gallery space: the reversal of fixed positions, freedom of movement, the performative and participatory aspects of the projection. As in the case of Breer's Floats and the peep boxes of the Brothers Quay, the viewer's participation consists primarily of freely moving about to explore the animation from different angles and distances. McCall multiplied *Line Describing a Cone* into a whole series of 'solid light films', and meanwhile also adapted his approach to newer technologies (comprising video and fog machines). From the perspectival geometry of conventional cinema, to the ambient projection within a gallery environment, McCall has moved on to transform projection from a performance into a permanent installation. This shifts the experience from a minimalist sense of narrative suspense (watching the circle draw to a close) towards a more ambient immersion into a visual, intangible dimension of looped duration. The film has been transformed back into the logic of an optical toy.

Since the 70s, the critical bias of Foucault's use of the terms *dispositif* and heterotopia has also evolved and now meets with a more constructive understanding. The crucial question remains whether the museum can function as a critical engine in a positive sense. As Beth Lord argues: "Museums today for the most part no longer aim to 'accumulate everything' or to 'constitute a place of all times that is itself outside time."(2006, 4) To her understanding, the real content of the museum is not objects, but interpretation:

> As a space of representation, the museum *is* a space of difference. Foucault's museum is not a funeral storehouse of objects from different times, but an

> experience of the gap between things and the conceptual and cultural orders in which they are interpreted. (7)

Following Lord's notion of interpretation as the relation between things and the words used to describe them, one can indeed interpret Foucault's *dispositif* as a concept of 'in-between', or in his own terms, the connection that exists between heterogeneous elements. In other words: animation as a metaphor. Instead of imposing an importance, a value, a judgment, Lord observes how contemporary musea invite people to fill in the gaps, allowing varying interpretations and appreciations. Conceiving the museum as a *dispositif* for activation rather than consolidation, is bringing it back to its origins, to the *Wunderkammer* and –cabinets, where the visitor was assumed to play an investigating part, instead of being passively subjectivified. More than cinema, animation always implied this constructive way of looking and decoding, as there is no reality effect (as in live action film) to be reconstructed.

Activating space

The impact of animation on the gallery or museum space can be thus a lot more meaningful than the dislocation of a screening from the darkened theater to a black box or to monitors inside a white cube. And it definitely has more potential than simply displaying profilmic artifacts (cels, sketches, objects) as autonomous art. Confronted with an aesthetic of the interval, between individual frames, peepholes and objects, between the objects and the surrounding space, between human and technological movement, between the gallery space and the 'real' world, each visitor enters an exhibition as a space of wonder, where the integral *mise-en-scène* is part of the experience, not 'just' the artworks, but also the space in between and around them. He or she goes there to animate and to be animated, to interpret and to be guided, to see and to complete one's perception, to actively engage with the *dispositif*. Without a motivated 'reader,' any scripted space remains a dead zone. Without an inhabitant, any constructed space remains a purely geometric artifice.

With her media-archaeological exhibition project *Devices of Wonder*, Barbara Maria Stafford equally insists on the importance of the space in between, the gap, the interval, and the critical potential of reflecting on older media within a contemporary context:

> We need an analogical concept of technology, one that restores awareness of the long and tangled lineage of apparatuses. As tools for transformation and revelation, visual technologies expand human consciousness, allowing people to see their material connections to larger ideas, forces, and movements. Instead of an apotheosis paradigm – in which the disembodied user is abruptly joined to the superior intelligence of a machine – the substance-filled gap implicit in the word *media* (from *medius,* 'middle') has to be recaptured. This is the lesson of legacy instruments for futuristic devices. (2001, 112)

Animation was never solely the domain of filmmakers. The Brothers Quay give prominence to the viewer through a mise-en-abyme of the *Wunderkammer*. Robert Breer's work activates the viewer by dynamizing both the floor, walls and ceiling of the white cube around him. Philippe Parreno's invites the viewer to edit a group show or artworks interspersed at great distances in time and place into a single story. Anthony McCall requires the viewer to interact and even interrupt his animated beam of light. Now animation is leaving behind the confines of the cinema to surface in exhibition spaces, their practices (no matter how divergent) systematically point out the legacy of earlier forms of visual animation and demonstrate its relevance for the present. Animation beyond the animated film implies a return to animation before the movie theatre.

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