

Quoadsubjectum.com : 'Tatiana Trouvé', by Rob McKeever, February 2nd, 2012

Tatiana Trouvé



TATIANA TROUVÉ Installation view Photo by Rob McKeever

The work is situated in an open space between matter and memory. This is where I wander and where the construction of a space linked to the development of psychic phenomena is expressed in twists in dimensions and intensities, in combinations that determine changes of pace and place the viewer on the threshold of a physical and mental experience, mobilizing his shoes as much as his mind.–Tatiana Trouvé

In the late 90s, the Paris-based artist Tatiana Trouvé began working on the series of drawings and installations that would later become her breakthrough project, the Bureau d'Activités Implicites (Office of Implicit Activities). The BAI immersed viewers in an isolated environment where objects and activities were organized with exaggerated specificity, according to Trouvé's own criteria. Although she has vastly widened the scope of her more recent projects, Trouvé continues to conceive of

them in the manner of the original BAI – as a series of highly controlled, closed systems. ‘The aleatory’, Trouvé has said, ‘must be completely constructed’.[1]

Born in Italy in 1968, Trouvé studied fine arts at the Villa Arson in Nice before making her home in Paris. Now one of France’s most prominent young contemporary artists, she first began attracting attention in 2001 when she received the prestigious Prix Ricard. By this time, Trouvé had been working on the BAI for nearly five years. The BAI was an evolving series of discrete architectural ‘modules’ with the partial openness of office cubicles, but gutted, re-shaped, and made of varying materials according to their contents. For the most famous of the modules, the Module administratif (Administrative Module), Trouvé fought paper with paper, organizing, manipulating, and cataloguing the numerous rejection letters she received as she entered the highly bureaucratized French art world. The Module à reminiscence (Reminiscence Module) consisted of a sealed, mirrored cylinder containing archived memories on scraps of paper. In both, the contents of the modules were efficiently sealed up and stamped with function-oriented titles – an air-tight approach which discouraged any search for meaning outside the systematically re-constituted worlds of the BAI.

In 2000, Trouvé began transforming a series of miniature architectural models that had once occupied the BAI into full-fledged, three-dimensional sculptural installations called polders. This marked a transitional point in her work: in later projects, she has displayed an increasing interest in extending the scope of her immersive exhibitions to include an explicit – yet always intensely controlled – investigation of multiple dimensions. At full-size, polders are half the scale of the objects they take after: chairs, gymnastics equipment, and other furnishings. By subtly manipulating objects whose standard size viewers were accustomed to relating to their own, Trouvé also heightened their awareness of the exhibition space as a total environment. In the face of Trouvé’s shrunken polders, viewers felt oversized – newly aware of the surrounding space, and their place within it.

Trouvé’s current Centre Pompidou exhibition, ‘4 between 3 and 2’, (which she was invited to design as the 2007 recipient of the Prix Marcel Duchamp) extends the polders’ spatial games one step further, easing viewers through a series of dimensional shifts, as hinted at by the exhibition’s title. The exhibition – one of a number of upcoming shows, including projects at Manifesta 7, the Turin Triennial, and the Kunsthall in Bergen, Norway – features drawings, sculptures, waist-high glass doors which open off the main gallery space into miniature mirrored passages, and two growing piles of black sand.

Formal consistency is a linchpin of Trouvé’s work: her totalizing aesthetic drives our own desire to believe completely, and lose ourselves in, her worlds. The three-dimensional works in ‘4 between 3 and 2’ are highly linear compositions, and familiar forms move smoothly between free-standing installations and two-dimensional drawings. A rope tossed into the air is fixed in place as it reaches its peak, freezing a moment in time. Yet the attenuated cast-iron installation looks more like an exquisite scribble from one of the neighboring drawings than something one can walk around. In turn, Trouvé’s drawings are extension environments of the

typically monotone gallery space: bare rooms or slices of deserted landscape house strange objects (in the form of metallic appliqués) resembling Trouvé's sculptures. Other props – metal bedframes and tables; what appear to be generators, old radios, and heaters – are distinguished by the same subdued hues, industrially-produced lines, and metallic fittings that have come to be Trouvé trade-marks.

Some of Trouvé's most compelling works are drawings. In a 2005 volume of illustrations entitled *Djinns*, her investigation of multiple, interchangeable worlds corresponds closely to her games across multiple dimensions in '4 between 3 and 2'. (The title of the book, which also includes an interview with Hans-Ulrich Obrist and a text by Arno Geiger, is a reference to Trouvé's childhood spent in Senegal, where it is widely believed that djinns, or spirits, coexist in a world parallel to our own.) *Djinns* compiles new and re-worked drawings of environments and objects of Trouvé's imagining, acting as a hermetic capsule within which we are nonetheless granted complete freedom of movement. Printed on a range of different papers – rough, smooth, translucent, opaque – in varying tones, the book's format allows Trouvé to layer her worlds as she layers pages.

Of *Djinns*, she has said: 'I would very much like this book to construct a kind of progression, as if one opened a door giving access to a room, then from there access to another, and I would like this journey to be psychological first and foremost.'^[2] For all the fluidity of movement across dimensions at the Centre Pompidou exhibition – from four to three to two, and back again – one has the impression of being carefully led by a guiding hand. Apparent escape routes all prove to be false. Upon close scrutiny, it becomes clear that the enigmatic mirrored passages opening off the main gallery simply turn a right angle, leading back to the same enclosed space where one stands.

At '4 between 3 and 2', two small holes in the wall let in silent streams of black sand which mount in spreading piles on the floor. Trouvé has spoken of this mesmerizing work as a vector which draws viewers to imagine the invisible, corresponding space which is gradually emptied as the gallery itself fills with sand.^[2] But a far more preoccupying issue is this unknown place's effect on the immediate environment we occupy. The sand continues flowing with an hourglass' quiet urgency: eventually her universe will fill up completely. Even as she punches through the retaining walls of her multidimensional world, seemingly opening it up, Trouvé reminds us of its closed, limited nature.

[1] 'Il faudra que l'aléatoire soit complètement construit.' From an interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist in the artist's book *Djinns* (2005). Translated into English in *Djinns* as 'The random has to be constructed.'^[2] Ibid.^[3] In 'Tatiana Trouvé', Violane Boutet de Monvel. *Art Review* no. 23, June 2003.