

NAMELESS SWIRLS, AN UNFOLDING IN PRÉSENCE

Philip van den Bossche (2003)

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[...] all the maps you have are of no use, all this work of discovery and surveying; you have to start off at random, like the first men on earth; you risk dying of hunger a few miles from the richest stores [...]" (Michael Butor, *Degrees*)

It is an attempt to go more deeply into the collaboration of Jennifer Tee (NL, 1973) with Roé Cerpac (NL, 1967), Harmen Liemburg (NL, 1966) and Erwan Mahéo (F, 1967). During the last six months they have worked closely together and collectively produced new works.

The result is not a solo exhibition by Tee, but rather a joint proposal without the signature of one particular artist. During the creative process, 'multiple authorship' even became an important element, together with the notion of 'copy and original', 'charting travels and relationships' and 'reproducing and reinterpreting cultural artefacts'. In the exhibition they form moments of perceptibility in a much more extensive investigation.

The four artists use the metaphor of the caravan in order to make a journey through an imaginary desert, each with their own baggage and without an outrider. The trails which now appear in the exhibition spaces guide the visitor along ceramic liana and tablets (produced this summer at the European Ceramic Work Centre in Den Bosch), silk-screened fabrics, models, a wailing camel and display tables with an abundance of objects. From the personal baggage of each of the travellers are visible and less visible, or recognisable, artefacts – the undulating landscape architecture of the Brazilian, Roberto Burle Marx (1909-1994), the painted and constructed sticks by André Cadere (1934 -1978), a model of the citadel in Kharkhorum (Mongolia), the designs of a never realised Raum der Gegenwart by Laszlo— Moholy-Nagy (1895 -1946) and a facsimile of the psychogeographical map *Discours sur les passions de l'amour* from 1957 by Guy E. Debord (1932 -1994).

Together with the other elements they form an 'entwined' map, a plan in which the four artists sometimes resolutely choose a form of 'drifting off' - in this exhibition it is more about the edges or the limitations rather than the centre. The following quote by Guy E. Debord, one of the founders in the Fifties of the Situationistic Movement, seems appropriate

here (but also for him there is no central role set aside): "Among the various Situationist procedures, drift is described as a technique of hurried passage through varied ambiances. The concept of drift is inseparably bound up with the recognition of psychogeographic effects and the assertion of a playful-cum-constructive pattern of behaviour, contrasting in every way with the classical notions of journey and walk [...] One or two people giving in to drift turn their backs on the reasons for moving, for a fairly lengthy period of time [...] in order to go along with the demands of the terrain and any meetings corresponding thereto."

The exhibition also contains several new works by the artist Jacqueline de Jong (NL, 1939), the logical result of an inspirational meeting with Jennifer Tee and Erwan Mahéo during their months of production. Her life until now is impossible to sum up here and is hardly known – her recent monograph is called *Undercover in Art*. In 1960 Guy E. Debord wrote in a letter to her: "Ainsi, pour le moment, toute la Hollande est ^ vous" (At this moment, all of Holland belongs to you). In 1962 the first issue of the now legendary publication *Situationist Times*, founded by De Jong appeared. Over the following years she published five other issues. The magazine was radical and experimental in its approach and contained contributions from a large number of avant-garde artists. In the various issues she gathered together an 'encyclopaedia of forms' - the fourth issue, for instance, was devoted to the labyrinth, and the fifth to the ring.

Roé Cerpac, Harmen Liemburg and Erwan Mahéo were invited by Jennifer Tee to take part in her visual world, and from their own individual practise and thinking create a multivocal narrative with her. In their first exploratory conversation, one of Tee's writings came up in which she states: "Every opening, or where possible, every exhibition should be a kind of event or festival, a unique happening. A festival is a moment of intensity that gives meaning and shape to life. It is my intention to create a link between visitors, the space and the objects, so that a temporary liberating moment is experienced (from time, place or imagination) and where a temporary oneness is sought between living and consciousness."

Without any doubt *Nameless Swirls, An Unfolding in Presence* is indebted to this personal declaration of intent, but the exhibition is more than that – it is a hybrid space, simultaneously 'in' and 'outside' the museum, a curiosity cabinet and a mental trip of a group of travellers. The exhibition does not signify an end to the collaboration, it only represents a stage on the collective map. The plan has been temporary unfolded and the trip to the edges continues from an arbitrary spot. This group can endure being shipwrecked on the African coast and being kidnapped by a local despot, like a group of artists, inventors, scholars and circus artists in the adventure story *Impressions of Africa* from 1910 by Raymond Roussel. In order to spend the time usefully, they prepare a gala performance.

Artists down the centuries have felt drawn and inspired by maps and map-making. In 2000 the curator Moritz Küng organised the exhibition *Orbis Terrarum, Ways of Worldmaking* on the subject at Antwerp's Museum Plantin-Moretus (the world-famous printers which printed and distributed the world's first atlases in the 16th century). The accompanying catalogue, compiled by Marie-Ange Brayer, is a major reference work on cartography and art.

The aforementioned quote by the French author Michel Butor is from a short text *Mapscapes or Cartographic Sites* by Robert Smithson (part of his article *A Museum of Language in the Vicinity of Art* from 1968) in which Smithson mentions among others Lewis Carroll's abstract cartography. In his *The Hunting of the Snark* (1876) the map contained 'nothing' (or in Carroll's words was "a perfect and absolute blank") and in *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* (1893) the map contains 'everything'.