

P E R F O
THE BRUSSELS BIENNIAL
R M A
OF
T I K
PERFORMANCE ART
17

RABIH MROUÉ & HITO STEYERL

PROBABLE TITLE: ZERO

PROBABILITY

29/03 – 20:30

lecture performance • 80 min. • in English • Kaaithheater

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THEATER

nl/ Voor Rabih Mroué en Hito Steyerl vormt de complexe verhouding tussen werkelijkheid en fictie de kern van hun artistieke praktijk. In deze lecture-performance denken ze na over waarschijnlijkheid. Steyerl raakt verstrikt in kwantum-superpositie, terwijl Mroué bij zijn vader aanklopt voor wiskundige berekeningen. Ze stoten op de 'nul-waarschijnlijkheid': een ruimte waarin alles mogelijk is maar niets te verklaren valt. Iedere logica vervalt of verdwijnt in de meedogenloze knip van een cinematografische edit.

- Rabih Mroué is acteur, regisseur en schrijver en stond met beeldend werk onder meer op dOCUMENTA (13). Thema's in zijn werk zijn o.a. de burgeroorlogen in Libanon en censuur in dictatoriale regimes. Hito Steyerl is filmmaakster en schrijfster. Haar films zijn te zien in musea en galleries. Ze stelt vragen over de aard van het beeld en de mogelijke (ideologische) misinterpretaties ervan.

fr/ Pour Rabih Mroué et Hito Steyerl, la relation complexe entre réalité et fiction constitue la quintessence de leur pratique artistique. Dans cette performance-lecture, ils réfléchissent sur la probabilité. Steyerl s'empêtre dans la superposition quantique tandis que Mroué frappe à la porte de son père pour des calculs mathématiques. Ils se heurtent à la « probabilité zéro » : un espace dans lequel tout est possible, mais rien ne peut s'expliquer. Toute logique est abandonnée ou disparaît dans un montage cinématographique sans merci.

- Rabih Mroué est acteur, metteur en scène et écrivain. Il expose en outre des œuvres plastiques et a participé, entre autres, à dOCUMENTA (13). Les thèmes de son œuvre sont souvent les guerres civiles au Liban et la censure dans les régimes dictatoriaux. Hito Steyerl est cinéaste et écrivaine. Ses films sont présentés dans des musées et des galleries. Elle interroge la nature de l'image et leurs possibles mésinterprétations (idéologiques).

en/ The complex relationship between reality and fiction lies at the core of Rabih Mroué and Hito Steyerl's artistic practice. In this lecture performance, they examine probability. Steyerl gets caught up in quantum superposition, while Mroué consults his father about mathematical calculations. They come across 'zero probability': a space in which everything is possible but nothing can be explained. Any kind of logic ceases to exist or disappears in the ruthless shearing of a cinematographic edit.

- Rabih Mroué is an actor, director and writer and his visual work has been featured at dOCUMENTA (13), amongst others. Themes in his work include the civil wars in Lebanon and censorship in dictatorial regimes. Hito Steyerl is a film-maker and writer whose films can be seen in museums and galleries. She asks questions about the nature of the image and possible (ideological) misinterpretations of it.

TRAVELLING IMAGES. NARRATIVES IN FUGUE / HITO STEYERL & RABIH MROUÉ

written for Hito and Rabih's participation with UNIA arteypensamiento, Sevilla.

Images, like other objects and/or artefacts, are historical agents that do not only inform us of past events but also, and above all, of the way or ways in which these events were codified. Like languages and cities, they are privileged inscription surfaces for historical studies or for exploring memory. As Didi-Huberman tells us, the recovery, reorganisation and circulation of images from the past entail attempts to conjure up a critical time, conducive not to identification but to political reflection.

The possibility of a critical time that allows us to reflect politically is, in turn, the possibility of obtaining extensive forms of temporality in which the past isn't brought to a close, finished or defined. To take a second look at certain images of the present, or from the present, to pick up the remnants, what has been left out of the archive, what remains in profane space, and place them in a new configuration, opposed to the values established by tradition in the archives of culture, unleashes new meanings and new potential that, in turn, come to be considered exemplary in the archives of cultural memory.

However, what allows for political reflection on time is the consideration that the account of the past is also a construction, an interpretation, a form of narrative: the archive is not a reflection of the real either, but a structure with its own syntax and ideology, and sources are not 'pure' but respond to a complex, stratified time that involves its own politics of truth in the Foucauldian sense. So, how can we reveal this construction, which is an ideological construction of time implicit in an image and thereby reintegrate it in another narrative and release new tension? How can we crack these policies of truth? How can we use contemporary images (images that are virtual, blurry, about to fade away) to propose other narratives? And above all, as Hito Steyerl and Rabih Mroué explore in their documentary and performance works, how can we overcome the transnational documentary jargon that connects people within global media systems? How can we suggest other regimes of identification and, especially, of recovery and omission of the past?

The critical reflection made by Hito Steyerl in her texts and documentaries, and the writing and conduct of the text in the performances by Rabih Mroué propose a change of paradigm in the political reflection from the sphere of the arts, starting from other uses and ways of treating images, overcoming their status as representations and examining them from their own facticity and materiality.

Precarious images taken from the World Wide Web, diffuse and poor, and street posters, photographs and newspaper cut-outs in constant movement are the source material. Images are no longer suggested in terms of reality or fiction, but are rather a pretext for a transformation in which their meaning becomes inseparable from their spatial, but also their emotional, sensual and empathetic dimensions. To point out the inconsistencies and disparities of images, to articulate other narratives in an ironic and distanced way are some of the procedures employed by both artists in practices that expand the possibilities of the documentary, drama and performance, while they reconsider the traditional differences and explore new relationships with audiences.

In the work of both Rabih Mroué and Hito Steyerl, travelling images play an important role: images crowding the suburban realms and lowlands of the web; images that change their meaning, outlook, framing, caption and often also their protagonists as they travel through time and space.

Mroué and Steyerl works are reflections upon the role do digital media play in creating new political and aesthetical means of expression; how do they speed up, slow down or modify conflict, civil war and the writing of history; how are media—video or audio tapes, JPEGs or posters—implicated in violence; how does the struggle over copyright and reproduction, over making things seen and heard, factor in these considerations.... And is a withdrawal from representation perhaps a new form of strike or refusal?

written, directed, performed by Hito Steyerl, Rabih Mroué | production HKW/Berlin, 2012

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