

ACCESS, REUSE, AND EXHIBITION

INTRODUCTION

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This fourth part of this book, which focuses on what is generally referred to as “exhibition strategies,” is structured in two parts. First, the ten contributions that make up chapter 9 explore the diversity of setups or principles of exhibition relating to film images that left behind their original cinematographic context (and its regime of projection in a theater with the lights off) to move towards museum spaces; or to works which come from the large and difficult to define category that is sometimes called media art or even time-based art. Second, Sarah Cook asks and discusses a fundamental question based on her experience as a renowned freelance curator of media art: *What now for curatorial practice?*

Without going into the detail of the following texts, I should probably emphasize an aspect which the outline given above pretends to conceal: even though the works of media art and films “defecting to the museum” may appear side by side in many exhibitions, even though they may be composed in part or in whole of similar moving images, they still raise markedly different issues. For lack of space I will mention just one of these, which is characteristic and crucial.

As its name indicates, media art became established more or less under the auspices of (contemporary) art, while cinema, if it may occasionally be credited with artistic value, is not immediately (or exclusively) a product of art. To put it better still: for film, entering the temples of art that are museums or galleries implies a journey which could be described in the terms once used by

André Malraux to refer to his “Musée imaginaire”:

To say that saints, Danaes, beggars, and jugs have become paintings, that gods and Ancestors have become sculptures, is to say that all these figures have left the world in which they were created for our own world of Art (which is not only the world of our art); it is to say that our Imaginary Museum is founded on the metamorphosis of where the works it selects belong.¹

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In short, when film is exhibited as “Art” in the “art world,” for example, in a museum, it breaks from its “original affiliation,” that is, the world of the film industry. This is not to say that the film has no aesthetic or artistic value outside of the museum. The problem raised here is institutional rather than aesthetic: when presented in the “art world,” film brings up issues for the museum as an institution. For their part, works of media art do not go on the same journey to reach the temple of art, but they are also confronted with some problems inherent in this temple: often contravening the criteria that define the traditional objects of art, these works do force the institution of the museum, or any other party responsible for their presentation, to reconsider the ordinary modalities of the exhibition as well as that of preservation and restoration, incidentally.

Confronting moving images with different origins throughout this part of the book, we do not mean to forget these differences. However, the stakes are not so much about speculating on these differences as about questioning the fact that, *for film images as well as media art works, the exhibition is not self-evident.*

NOTE

- 1 This is Franck Le Gac's translation of the original French quote: "Dire que les saintes, les Danaés, les gueux et les pichets sont devenus des tableaux, que les dieux et les Ancêtres sont devenus des sculptures, c'est dire que toutes ces figures ont quitté, pour notre monde de l'Art (qui n'est pas seulement le monde de notre art), celui dans lequel elles étaient créées ; que notre Musée Imaginaire se fonde sur la métamorphose de l'appartenance des œuvres qu'il retient" (Malraux, 1965 [1947]: 240).

REFERENCE

Malraux, André. *Le Musée imaginaire*. Paris: Gallimard: 1965 [1947].

