

Marie Voignier

Selected works 2010

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"Marie Voignier"

Off-Side

Portraits. A still shot of a man in a shirt and tie who is explaining in detail a concept of a virtual company (with inserts of empty offices). A young woman is reading through and trying to mime the synopsis of a stand-up routine in a back-yard (cut-editing on her failed attempts). Aspiring actresses talk freely about their motivation and their frustrations (synthesis of their remarks in voice-off). A woman poses like a starlet in front of an open-air cinema screen (photographs). Mostapha, a mediator at Vénissieux, reads a commentary of summer of 2003 (soundtrack over watercolours and drawings). Readers give public recitals of transcriptions of internet chat (with smiley signs) or a courtroom report...

Made using minimal performance, Marie Voignier's work does not provide much to see. Simple frames. Few effects. Concentration and precision. Reconstructions which seem rudimentary at first glance, which do not try to give the "impression of reality" and seem even more formally reduced as they contain complex risks in terms of performance. For it is not so much a question of veracity which is at stake here, rather the – far more indistinct - fictional off-camera activity. That is to say: to only show characters which are acting, but acting alone. Without an audience. Without a stage. Off-side (as in football). Measuring the remains of illusion and interpretation behind the scenes of reality, in spontaneous and intimate gestures and expression. Like a smuggler, Marie Voignier paces up and down the indistinct boundaries which separate real identity and fictional role, by summoning the invisible theatre of inner fantasies. And if these short sketches convey an indefinable emotion, it is that which comes from the vigour (in this case, verbal) of the human being grappling with his own scenario: intimate, social or professional. Consequently the seemingly neutral places chosen by the artist as the setting for these accounts define so many theatrical spaces at the heart of daily life. The empty office, the cemetery, the living room, the multimedia library... A scenographic condensation which respects the rules of tragedy: unity of time, place and action.

Refereeing

As the director, the artist is not the objective guardian of these accounts. She composes "assisted" portraits of some of her contemporaries. Her formal, discreet interventions are no less essential: to carry out a distancing, a breaking off from the subject each time. Rewriting, voices-off, reinterpretations, off-camera, graphic inserts, cut-editing: So many methods in order to establish an artificial but intentional dialogue with her characters. So many transcendent and quasi-telepathic strategies. Deciphering. Translations. It is not surprising that the artist often demonstrates an interest in judicial rituals: a trial offers a dramatisation of reality behind closed doors, not broadcast, which is only based on the "official report". In the end: talking in place of. Moreover, the watercolours from the video *Untitled* (Vénissieux Multimedia library) (1) and the drawings from the installation *Beirut Locations* refer directly to the paradoxical status of courtroom sketches. The same efficiency in removing the realism. The same concern for objectivity which fictionalises. The same distant

immediacy. With Marie Voignier, the transcription of mental processes, a desire for narrative objectivity and an interest in using the décor to fictionalise call to mind certain aspects of Duras' style. Shaping the writing (or the image) as if it were a theatrical expression. Always using indirect speech. Stuttering. In voice-off, the artist rehearses the speech given by Maryline, the « goth » which is itself the discourse of a rock group which itself comes from a totalitarian discourse. Who are the authors of these words? A collective work of ghosts.

Penalty area

In spite of a certain gentleness in the attention given to these characters, Marie Voignier's work gives a subtle criticism of the transitory statute of fiction within social and political fields. A penetrating fiction, which, beyond its objects of collective inscription (novel, story, film) finds itself sent to the heart of the intimate, in an irrepressible movement of individuation. Without nostalgia, but with formidable acuteness, the artist flushes out the erring ways of a collective imagination reduced to efficiency (the fake company, the location search), to fantasy (the actresses, the performer), to chance encounters (the chat). A sort of fictional minimalism, which no longer needs to be invented, but simply framed right at the heart of reality. But there is nothing really desperate here: hope resides in the energy of the transmission, in spite of everything, in the image of this actress who is hesitant yet willing, trying to regain the gestures and signs of a story which has well and truly escaped us.

Guillaume Désanges

(1) This work was carried out with Claire-Lise Panchaud and Florentine Lamarche. Florentine Lamarche was the artist who did the water colours.

Guillaume Désanges is an art critic, exhibition organiser, member of the editorial committee of the magazine « Trouble ». He coordinates artistic projects for the Aubervilliers Laboratories.

Hearing the shape of a drum

2010, video HDV, 17 min.

Co-produced by the 6th. Berlin biennial
and CAC Brétigny, Contemporary art center in Brétigny



Hearing in the shape of a drum follows the media outburst following the lawsuit known as the “Amstetten Monster.” The days-long gathering of hundreds of journalists and technical teams are the basis of the film. As the proceedings were held behind closed doors, the press is presented with a major difficulty: absence of an image.

Beyond the observation of the fabrication of images and subjects at all costs, where nothing is known of seen, the film poses the question of the presence of the artist, placed on the same level as journalists with the tools of production.

Holes for the eyes

2009

Vidéo HDV, 12 min.

In collaboration with Vassilis Salpistis



The Greek ethnologist-museologist George Adamidis walks through the museum in which he works to get to the storage area in order to look for a traditional ceremonial costume. Once in his office, instead of studying and indexing the costume as he would normally do, he puts it on and goes through a series of strange gestures between role-playing and performance. Acting as the mad scientist who is trying to uncover the secret potential of the object, he is momentarily diverting the sole current function of the costume as a museum exhibit. The video focuses on the process of museum-, which concerns art as well as ethnographical museums.

Hinterland

2009

Video HDV, 49 min.

Co-production: Capricci Films / Contemporary Art Center of Brétigny



At first a few buildings in the middle of nowhere, the camera then delves deep into exotic, luxuriant vegetation. Here we are in the Tropical Islands, a leisure complex near Krausnick, a village 70 kilometres south of Berlin on the site of a former Soviet airbase. In this spot, and moving from one location to another, the upheavals of the last century pile up like sediment: Europe's scars and contradictions, its men-tal space, its dreams and illusions. In this *Hinterland* (indicated in the title, which geographers would define as an area of economic development linked with the activity of a port), Marie Voignier unravels the currents of history: the location director and the village elders, as well as the newcomers to the village, like the young man who has come to try his luck within this cosseted universe with its makeshift huts and painted skies. Hovering over all of this a white balloon which floats discretely overhead throughout the film, with a drawing based on a watercolour called *Angelus Novus* (1920) by Paul Klee, described by a rapidly edited 1940 text by Benjamin as an «Angel of History» facing the past,

« he wanted to linger on, awaken the dead and make whole what had been smashed. But there was a storm brewing in Paradise, which had gotten caught in his wings, a wind so strong that the angel could no longer close them. This storm propelled him unstoppably into the future to which his back was turned, while the pile of debris before him grew skyward. This storm is what we call progress. »

Making the angel the main focus of the set is a deliberate gesture on Marie Voignier's part which reflects the extent of her ambition – discreet and incisive, intuitive and articulate.

Nicolas Féodoroff in Catalogue of the International Film Festival, Marseille, France, 2009

Mediathèques award, FID 2009, Marseille



Bonjour chez vous

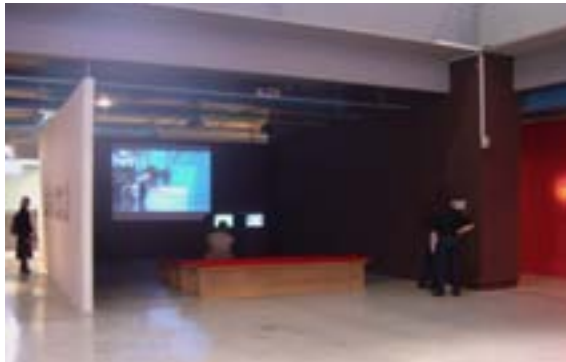
Be seeing you

2008

Video installation, 1 projection + 2 monitors



Exhibition view, Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2008.



“Be seeing you” is a video installation made for Cinéma du Réel 2008 in the Centre Pompidou. This three screen installation has been developed with the use of film material from the first stages of shooting “Hinterland”.

Au travail

At work

2008

Video, 48 min.

Co-production: Vivement lundi ! - Art to Be (Rennes Art biennial) - TV Rennes 35



[...] Marie Voignier was commissioned to make *Au Travail* (At work), a film that keeps a record of experiences enjoyed during the setting-up of the Biennale...

...The film was constructed little by little over the six-month period preceding the exhibition, focusing essentially on the residency programme and core of the Biennale project.

Au travail is an artist's look at an experiment that involves other artists and their work systems. Marie Voignier elected to film in situ, where companies opened their doors for the first time. *Au travail* strives to show the confrontation between art world and corporate world...

Via small touches, *Au travail* outlines the contours of a meeting that is in no way self-evident. If certain exchanges between artists and employees seem promising, the film questions the role that might be played by the former within companies, and the rightfulness and validity of organizing the latter's cultural life. It sheds light on the doubts and mutual curiosities of the artists, employees and managerial staff and despite various uncertainties, reveals the benefit derived from this program by the company executives.

Nathalie Travers, in catalogue Valeurs croisées.



Going for a walk

2007

Video installation

3 monitors, chairs, headphones.



Exhibition view "edition:exposition", MLIS, Villeurbanne (Fr), 2007.

Going for a walk is a series of five videos. The project was to conduct an interview with an actress, Natasha Black, and then to do a remake of this interview with the same person on four different occasions throughout the year. Elements of film direction were gradually introduced, as the episodes progress the interviews become more and more scripted and performed. The shooting always took place in the same setting, a forest, slowly changing with the seasons throughout the series.

The interview dealt with the professional experiences of Natasha as a voice actress and a journalist. However, the repetition becomes unbearable. Natasha refuses to play once more her own role in an "interview" (now transformed into a script) thus causing the outburst of the project's principle.



Un minimum de preuves

A minimum of evidence

2007

Video DV, 10 min.



A minimum of evidence is a kind of methodological utterance, which deliberately mixes up the syntax of the instruction manual, pulp fiction and inquiry report.

This continuation of stylistic changes and the evacuation of reference points exclude any possible storytelling.



Extract: Dust entirely covers the surface of the earth. There is not one single object that is not enveloped in dust, since at the very moment we begin to remove it, a new layer is settling down.

Body and clothes are permanently covered in a layer of dust whose extent depends on their cleaning frequency and on their environment.

Dust is a scale model of our surroundings.

It's the unique mark of a location, an apartment, a room, a forest or a road.

We collect dust samples from clothes, inside the pockets, under the shoes, on the skin, in the hair, on the eyebrows, in the ears, under the fingernails, from the weapons, from the chips of a knife's blade, or in the grooves of its handle.

Le bruit du canon

The cannon's blast

2006

Video DV, 27 min.



Each year, a curse hits the Locarn region in Brittany. The sky is filled with blackness, not a single branch or electric cable is left uncovered. In growing numbers, it taunts the farmers; it swarms across the sky in huge, terrifying swoops, waiting for the final assault. The disgusted farmers observe their damaged crops helplessly. Abandoned by the public authorities, they are left to fight the war alone.

Best short film award in Cinéma du Réel 2007
Quality price of the National Cinema Center (CNC) 2008.





Western DDR

2005

Video DV, 10 min



[...] From the very first images of the film *Western DDR* (2005) directed by Marie Voignier, a voice-over explains the unusual views of a phantom village. “Silver Lake City” is an amusement park with a Western theme, which was only open for one season. A cowboy village was built in a former communist holiday camp of the DDR in Templin, north of Berlin. Almost 50 km from the Polish border, “Silver Lake City” had a music hall, several saloons, a church, a forge, shops, a bank and a cemetery. This film is about the conversion of one political and economic system to another and the failure of this transformation. Culture shock ensues when amusement replaces ideology, a failed accelerated conquest of the West. Built on the former “Pioneer” holiday camp, the name of the communist youth organization founded in 1948 intended to form the minds of the children in accordance with the Party, the park also closed its doors. The link with the pioneers of the Far West is troubling; in this planted décor, emptied of its visitors, the occasional apparition of actors who wait, prepare, and play their scenes throws a doubt onto present and past. The Pioneer children, potential visitors of the park, still haunt the place like the cowboys and Indians. The eyewitness accounts of the owner of the inn in Templin, the waitress, the old man at the train station and the caretaker bring life to the deserted images via their reminiscences and commentaries. However, it is a uniform voice – canceling the diversity of the experiences and expectations – that speaks.

Mo Gourmelon, in Ideal.loop, Espace Croisé, Roubaix, 2007

Les fantômes

The ghosts

2004

Video installation: video DV, 13 min., wood, carton.



*Exhibition view "Les Enfants du Sabbat",
Contemporary Art Center, Thiers (Fr), 2005.*



Marie Voignier makes a film from a found script. She builds and frames her sequences with the precision of an archaeologist, outlining the educational speech of a training agent in order to extract a scenario.

She isolates the description of the role-playing apprentices from this speech and focuses on the portrayal of the training program's virtual setting. Voignier also lets the man stage himself, allowing the film be written before our eyes.

Marie Voignier's film sets up and takes down the simulacrum of a Market architecture, amplifying the cruelty of economic exchanges.

Pierre Bal-Blanc, Contemporary art center, Brétigny, France.