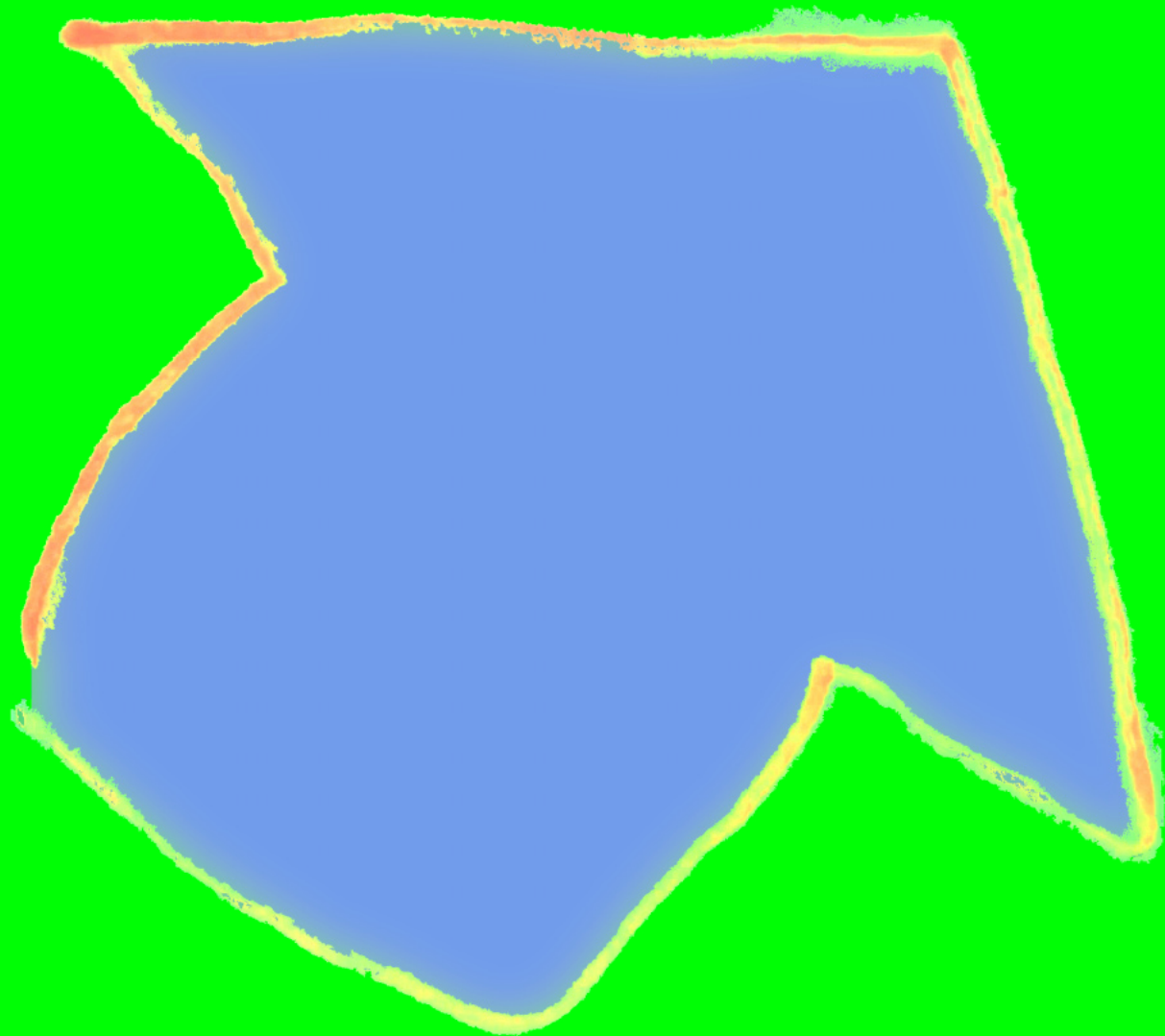


Archive of a itinerary



(January 2020 –
June 2022)

les gens d'Uterpan's
residency at the
Fondation des Artistes –
MABA in Nogent-sur
Marne (France) headed
by Franck Apertet





Introduction

Following the grant they received from the Fondation des Artistes, formerly the National Foundation of Graphic and Visual Arts, for the creation of *Library*, the project of a residency by les gens d'Uterpan at the MABA was suggested to Caroline Cournède in 2018. Based on an architecture of time according to three vectors* differentiated as organic time, historical time, and narrative time, this residency led by Franck Apertet began in January 2020 by applying these vectors on the historical enclave that is the Fondation des Artistes in the city of Nogent-sur-Marne, currently spread out between an art center (MABA), a retirement home for artists (Maison nationale des artistes), artist's studios, and a 10-hectare park (25 acres).

**Organic time* engages the body and nature; it includes the park, the retirement home residents, the people working on-site, and the visitors. This vector incorporates real-time experience, movement, and performance.

Historical time constructs the abstraction of a continuum leading to the production of human meaning (or lack thereof). It corresponds to the heritage, to the construction, to the cultural dimension of the site. This vector pertains to the exhibition as format, composition frame, and as a historical marker.

Narrative time emancipates itself from the laws that govern organic time and that operate in historical time. This vector is that of creation, deconstruction, and transgression. It is invention, the dream, the art.

Steps

-Meetings and recordings sessions

As the project faced the Covid 19 health crisis, several recording sessions with residents of the Maison nationale des artistes and members of the nursing, technical and administrative staff of the retirement home took place. During these sessions, each person was asked to verbally describe movements, gestures, and dances from their own memories, or by inventing them. These gestures, social, contextual, and emotional descriptions were used as material for the choreographic composition written day after day at a table, during the *Panique au dancing* exhibit, by Océane Meunier, a young woman with no formal training, interested in creation.



Invited by Caroline Cournède in the spring of 2021 to participate in the initiative launched by TRAM network "Confined projects: Speak out, concede nothing", Franck Apertet submitted the article *Trébuchons (Let's stumble)* along with a riddle.

Trébuchons

Recently, I asked a documentary author retired at the Maison nationale des artistes in Nogent-sur-Marne to describe "the bourgeois ball" she was suddenly referring to in her mental improvisation: "It's a nightmare," she replied, looking outraged with her gaze arrested by her vision; "They can't dance!". With the recording sessions I am doing on the theme of physicality in this retirement home for artists adjacent to the MABA where les gens d'Uterpan are in residence, we see how difficult it is to discuss gesture, movement, and dance, outside and beyond personal memories and specific cultural codes, that is to say to what extent learning, etiquette, and self-censorship condition this whole mechanism.

Nowadays, to preserve the masters, we favor female masterminds. This is a good thing. But feminine, masculine, or otherwise, these figures are similarly pinned to the wall in a selective manner so as to maintain the fortress in place. Because it is only when it operates within the precise framework provided, to assume, circumvent, and to absorb the consequences, that culture is accepted and passed on. A containment that is now reinforced and, in a way, fences in the defensive strategy put in place against the epidemic. The cultural sector and, beyond that, creation and freedom are more firmly restricted and instrumentalized.

Culture is what allows us to recognize this for ourselves. Human understanding has already covered a lot of ground, and it is our duty to teach newcomers that our world is old, but not yet complete. Despite what some thinkers claimed, being simultaneously teacher and student is far from being tangible in those who decide on education; the citizen outbursts that are spreading to all sectors of society, including education, are a significant expression of a persistent one-sidedness and of a tenacious culture of denial.

Turning away from the overly reassuring availability of culture is now part of the struggle against neoliberal exclusiveness, selective justice, and the dumbing down of the citizen. For let us understand, culture has not only an inert, protecting, decorative, and profitable appearance, but it also generates reflections which in turn motivates actions whose occurrence and repetition make the veneer peel off. Stumbling over is a court disharmony which, in a French film, signs the hero's downfall in Versailles, and is a highly beneficial dynamic. For in a motionless society where only technological advancement is authorized (as it represents a vector of obedience), mobility, experiment, and action that current provisions confiscate even further, are eminently liberating and productive.

Deprived of cultural places by the sudden intrusion of an organic temporality in our historical time, we must relearn to see, reflect, and to judge for ourselves. All healing stems from individual responsibility and is combined with an impulse to open up, not to close down.

So, let's stumble, because who wants to go back to exactly the same world as before?

Steps

-City concert

A listening session of the *Topologie* score in Vienna (Austria) composed from recorded sounds of this capital city, was held on March 19, 2021, for the residents of the Maison nationale des artistes and the people working on-site, along with a projection of visuals captured during the activation of the strategy in Vienna, from April 5 to 14, 2012.

-Uchronie

-Home clubbing

The piece *Home Clubbing* (2003) was activated on October 2, for the nationwide event Nuit Blanche 2021, in the Smith-Lesouëf Library, by Perrine Gontié, Lodie Kardouss, Deborah Lary, and Francesca Ziviani.

Raised on a stage reduced to a pedestal, three dancers continuously adjust and develop their gestures, their movements, and the circulations the space demands of them, without ever touching.

For Nuit Blanche, the trio was sustained for six hours by a rotation of four performers.

Appel à uchronistes
18 septembre et 19 septembre

les gens d'Uterpan ont initié un principe exponentiel d'infiltration de l'espace public intitulé Uchronie.
Uchronie consiste à replacer dans la ville des séries synchronisées de postures ou de déplacements issus de comportements et d'attitudes physiques, observés dans l'espace public. Ces séquences sont transmises à des participants et agencées avec précision en fonction de contextes urbains spécifiques. Pouvant impliquer un nombre important de participants, ces actions ne sont perceptibles que fortuitement. Leur déroulement et leurs occurrences sont simplement livrés à l'observation des occupants de l'espace urbain et des passants. L'addition du temps et des gestes synchronisés des participants d'Uchronie au temps singulier de ceux qui peuplent l'espace public, ouvre un temps qui n'existe pas, un temps hors du temps officiel. Uchronie est annoncé uniquement lorsque son activation nécessite un appel ouvert à participation, néanmoins des perpétuations d'Uchronie ont lieu régulièrement.

Sur la base d'une participation volontaire, un appel à uchronistes est lancé pour les journées du samedi 18 septembre et du dimanche 19 septembre 2021, de 14h à 18h.

Vous pouvez joindre 1 ou 2 journées. Votre présence sera requise en continu selon l'horaire annoncé. Chacune des journées sera singulière, elle alternera un temps d'apprentissage à la Fondation des Artistes - MABA à Nogent-sur-Marne, 16 Rue Charles VI, 94130 Nogent-sur-Marne, du ou des modules prévus ce jour-là et leurs activations dans la ville.

Pour organiser ces journées, nous vous demandons de vous inscrire avant le jeudi 16 septembre sur l'adresse contact@lesgensduterpan.com en précisant votre nom et votre numéro de téléphone, ou en appelant le 06 51 92 64 10.

*Uchronie : mot inventé par Charles Renouvier pour son livre « Uchronie, l'utopie dans l'histoire » (1867).
Étymologiquement, Uchronie désigne un « non-temps », un temps qui n'existe pas.

www.lesgensduterpan.com



Panique au dancing, une exposition

(14 octobre 2021 - 13 mars 2022)
des gens d'Uterpan à la MABA -
conception Franck Apertet



Resulting from the combination of the temporal spectrum with les gens d'Uterpan's own reflection on the relationship to the visitor already put forward with the strategies *Geography* (CAC Vilnius, Lithuania, 2012), *Meditation* (Arnolfini Arts, Bristol, Great Britain, 2013) as well as the procedures *Scène à l'Italienne* (Proscenium) (Salle Principale, Paris, 2015 ; documenta 14, Cassel, Germany, 2017), *Anthropometry* (Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2016) and *Safety instructions* (Z33, Hasselt, Belgium, 2020), the exhibition *Panique au dancing* was featured at MABA from October 14, 2021 to March 13, 2022.

Set in the middle of the residency schedule, *Panique au dancing* posits an ascending time, emerging from the ground, leaving it, and soaring vertically. A present tense representing the present in the past, in the present, and in the future. The exhibition specifically addresses the role of visitors in the exhibition process at a time when the interchangeable status of the artist, the curator, and the producer are drawing new outlines of authority while neither questioning nor challenging the very contours and convention of exhibitions.

Panique au dancing stems from a specific context, history, and aesthetic. It connects various components, objects, elements, events, etc., that have been the subject of les gens d'Uterpan's own reflections on the body, authority, and the conditioning of art by neoliberalism. Among other issues addressed by the exhibition, its components attest to a value that lies elsewhere. Its ecosystem, the weight attributed to each of its elements and the interpretation offered to the visitor without any specification, constitute a commentary on the models imposed by the art industry and on the overproduction of objects produced for its commercial use. This mutation, similar to the structure of the components assembled in the exhibition, argues for the freedom that is still possible and desirable for artistic projects.

Driven by the practice and the choreographic expertise of its author, *Panique au dancing* operates the conversion of time into space, displacement, and into movement for the visitor.

This applied physicality gives continuity to the standardized process of dance and tasks in exhibitions; a process that les gens d'Uterpan initiated with *Home Clubbing* (CAC Brétigny) in 2003, and then in 2005 with the *X-Event 2* protocols (CAC Brétigny, Centre d'art contemporain le Parc Saint Léger à Pougues-les-Eaux, Centre international d'art et du paysage de Vassivière, Domaine départemental de Chamarande, Biennale d'art contemporain de Lyon 2007). With *Panique au dancing*, les gens d'Uterpan reclaim the intermediate space that separates objects and the nonevent temporality of the performance in the exhibition to establish visitors as interstitial subjects and motifs of the exhibition; integrating them as central work through the organization and distribution of their active and passive impulses, as well as through their attitudes and acquired behaviors, conscious and unconscious. This appointment, which reverses the gaze of the visitor to the visitor, questions the functions, the issues of power and the values that currently drive the artistic field, and comes at a time when the roles of author and artist are being claimed indifferently by the curator or the producer.

Fully apprised that we all participate in the instrumentalization of art, the exhibition becomes a "think-see-as-a-whole" that offers a tale of shifts, choreographic issues, and manipulations that have become omnipresent.

Assistant: Sarah Mercadante

Graphic design: Achim Reichert (Achi.me)

Specific creations

made for Panique au dancing :

Tino

Statement

Artifact reacting to the visitor passing by.

Video (je vois)

Statement

Still manual frame shot of a seated person's face enunciating an undisclosed text.

Actress : Océane Meunier, photography and editing : Clément Apertet

Entropie

Statement

Over a predefined time period and according to three protocols, two people mutually wear out their energies through the physical resistance they put up against each other.

Interprets : Perrine Gontier, Louison Valette

Components

of Panique au dancing listed in

alphabetical order

in the exhibition brochure

- 1 - a 1403,106 yard string (perimeter of the property)
- 2 - armchair (from the MABA artists' residency apartment)
- 3 - audience settings
- 4 - balusters (from Smith-Lesouëf's Library)
- 5 - bamboo (from the park)
- 6 - bench (from a previous exhibition, design by Kévin Cadinot)
- 7 - blue direction arrows
- 8 - desk, chair and people temporarily busy writing a choreography from recordings made at the Maison nationale des artistes or writing the exhibition archive.
- 9 - ceramic cicada (*Tino*, creation les gens d'Uterpan, 2021)
- 10 - coloured filters
- 11 - crown
- 12 - curtains (from a previous exhibition)
- 13 - cushions (accessories of the strategy *Meditation*, les gens d'Uterpan, 2013)
- 14 - eggs
- 15 - excavation (hole in the park)
- 16 - front entrance banner of the exhibition
- 17 - interior shutters setting (quote from les gens d'Uterpan)
- 18 - letter (content)

Written by Madeleine Smith, one of the two sisters who used to own the site, to Jean-Jacques Henner, an artist who taught painting at the Louvre. Madeleine was a student of him; he was thirty-four years older than her. Against her daughter's wishes, Madeleine's mother never gave this letter to Henner.

- 19 - *Library*, les gens d'Uterpan (2017) - consultation upon registration

Created for documenta 14 (2017), Kassel, Germany. Researchers, in Germany : Verena Kittel, in France : Florian Gaité. Shelves : Dominique Mathieu. Specific partners : Fondation Nationale des Arts Graphiques et Plastiques (Paris), Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication - Direction générale de la création artistique, Salle Principale.

- 20 - location of an unfindable painting

The painter André Leroux (1911-1997), an unconditional heir of the 19th century masters, is said to have undertaken a portrait (self-portrait?) during his stay at the Maison nationale des artistes, which he started again day after day and never completed (archives of the site).

Components

- 21 – metal strut
- 22 – Meudon white
- 23 – mediating
- 24 – menus (Maison nationale des artistes)
- 25 – monograph of les gens d’Uterpan, Flash Art, 2021 – exposed
- 27 – pétanque balls
- 16 – soil (from the park)
- 28 – *Statue of the Grotto of Bacchus, Watteau Park, Nogent-sur-Marne.*
Unsigned and unlisted work. City of Nogent-sur-Marne’s lend.
With the help of Anatole France, Jules Claretie (administrator of the Comédie Française) and the painter Harpignies, the Smith sisters, assisted by Pierre Champion (who later married Madeleine and became mayor of Nogent), falsely claimed that Antoine Watteau (1684-1721) had died here in order to prevent the planned construction of a boulevard through the park on their property. The park was listed in 1908. Pierre Champion revealed the ploy when his wife died.
- 29 – siporex blocks (left-overs from a shooting here)
- 30 – stainless steel signage plate (from a previous programming)
- 31 – temporarily active protocol (*Entropy*, creation les gens d’Uterpan, 2021)
Interprets: Perrine Gontié, Louison Valette
- 32 – video (*Video*, creation les gens d’Uterpan, 2021) Océane Meunier (actress), Clément Apertet (photography and editing)
- 33 – viewport (view on the shed)
- 34 – venue sheet
- 35 – visitors
- 36 – window ajar

Description of

Panique au dancing by Franck Apertet

Past the detachment and the high wrought iron gate that divides the enclosure of the estate, today located at 16 rue Charles VII, visitors arrive on the other side of the inner courtyard to discover the façade and the historic entrance of this building, whose construction began in the seventeenth century and was successively remodeled until it became the Maison d’Art Bernard Anthonioz, which presents *Panique au dancing*, an exhibition by les gens d’Uterpan. This portal, also in wrought iron painted black, is made of glass. It is not the entrance to the art center. On the stone stoop, one can see a bench made of MDF board segments, red, green, brown, and purple. Someone may be sitting there. This parallelepiped was a part of the scenography for another exhibition at MABA, which during the Covid-19 programming disruption, was originally used during the time period initially planned for *Panique au dancing*. Preserved to align with the north-south axis that lays out the house between courtyard and garden, also visible from the inside of the vestibule, this showcase piece of furniture is subjected to the uncertainties of weather between October 13, 2021, and March 13, 2022.

To the right in the courtyard stands the brick facade of the Smith-Lesouëf Library, which one enters from Rue Charles VII. The *Library* procedure created by les gens d’Uterpan and exhibited at the Torwache in Kassel for *documenta 14* (Germany, 2017), can be consulted inside, for the duration of the exhibition. Positioned side-by-side on both side of the zenithal ceiling made of glass blocks that runs across the floor of its wood-paneled reading room, the two shelves full of books bathe in the light that streams down from the pavilion’s translucent white glass roof.

The entrance to the MABA is on the first floor of the building that precedes the library. Under the reception glass canopy, a 350 cm x 30 cm (138in x 12in) PVC panel highlights the title of the exhibition. Created by graphic designer Achim Reichert who produced all the visual and written material for *Panique au dancing*, the early placement of its title integrates into the exhibition the lobby and the people who deliver the narrative montage that they individually developed from their relative knowledge of les gens d’Uterpan, from what has been transmitted to them up to that point, and from the details they heard during the visits organized by Franck Apertet.

In the hall, attached to the back wall on the right, a blue arrow measuring 97 cm x 117 cm (38in x 46in) with an iridescent outline of yellow, orange, and green, faces west, towards the Maison nationale des artistes, a retirement home using sections of the buildings that are closed to the public. Beneath this inciting as well as indicative arrow, the first visitors can see a coral-colored molded plastic chair and a lightweight desk with chrome legs topped with a black metal mesh top. This workstation made from available MABA furniture pieces is placed and displaced across various locations during the exhibition, is sometimes occupied either by Océane Meunier, who writes the choreographic narrative based on recordings made with residents and staff members of the Maison nationale des artistes, or at other times the desk is occupied by Franck Apertet, who writes there the description you’re listening, with neither a schedule nor a timetable announcing these moments of presence.

While waiting to be replaced by the actual volume, visible through the window in the entrance, a full-scale model of the monograph of les gens d’Uterpan is displayed under a 30 cm3 (12in) cube made out of plexiglass and set on a rectangular base made of MDF wood.

Description of

On the pillar to the left of the reception desk, where the current exhibition poster is usually located and conventionally marks its entrance, we can only see the dates for *Panique au dancing* and mentions of the sponsors.

Even before walking through the threshold, visitors notice an indentation in the anthracite cement floor that covers the entire ground floor of the exhibition halls. Forced to enter the corridor that follows either to the left or to the right, visitors can see through the open doorway of the thick corridor wall, a light-colored curtain hanging from the ceiling of the exhibition hall below, as well as a construction forestay placed under the skylight of a passageway to a following room. The floor of the corridor with black-painted walls slopes differently on the right and on the left, the right side being more inclined and its slope longer than that of the left side. To the left, the corridor leads to a white space where, during a certain time period of the exhibition, the work table and the coral chair faced the wall and turned their back to visitors. On the right side, a spherical and bright object appears to have been arrested in the fall down the slope. While walking towards the ball, visitors realize that it is a *pétanque* (boule game) ball with a chrome surface engraved with doublet striations. Illuminated by a projector set up as a shower and by the daylight coming through the glass door at the end of the corridor, the surface of this stationary ball comes to life with the movements of the people passing by. Beyond this manifestation of permanent disruption essential to creation, the slope of the corridor ends in the first exhibition hall on the west side, where one enters by turning left.

Oriented towards the entrance, the old, brick colored velvet *fauteuil crapaud* (low padded armchair), which is used to furnish the artists' residence apartments, welcomes the visitor. From the outset, the hollow of the seat questions the possible use of the component of the exhibition and their free manipulation by visitors. To thrust one's body into this comfortable armchair from the Salomon de Rothschild Hotel in Paris seems as conceivable as it is problematic given the self-censorship governing our behavior at exhibitions, the risk of objectively exposing oneself to visitors who barge in. It is certainly also due to the fact that the seat is lowered to the height of a primary school chair.

To the right of the armchair, two of the interior shutters similar to vault doors, attached on both sides of the southern corner of this white room, lean against each other and protrude into the space. The angle formed by these flaps refers to the *Géographie* strategy (2012) by removing part of the space from the exploration offered to visitors. Facing this retracting wall, visitors are given confirmation of their status as exposed subjects in *Panique au dancing*. The window's exterior blind is rolled down, two projectors shed light on the top of the leaning shutters while a third projector points vertically towards the inside of the armchair. Three steps behind the backrest, the construction forestay stretched between this hall and the next, divides the walkway into two distinct parts of 110 cm and 130 cm (43in x 51in) in width. The presence of this structure, whose foot and spindle have been painted red, warns visitors of the potential danger of an ongoing imbalance as much as it offers to visitors a choice between two possible crossings. The vanishing line formed by the curtain perceived from the corridor draws the visitor's gaze towards the visitors who are currently using the corridor. Commissioned for a previous exhibition, this theater leg curtain made of unbleached, fireproof fabric puckers widely across the floor and

Description of

takes up about three-quarters of this white hall. Black cotton knots hold the rough, stiff fabric of the curtain to a steel wire that runs across the hall at the height of a standard home ceiling. The silhouettes of the visitors moving behind the curtain that is gradually diverging, become visible against the light. The perspective of the remaining halls on the ground floor and what draws visitors to the space behind the curtain remains an enigma until the obstacle is finally negotiated. As in the theater, the curtain conceals a future except that in the exhibition, it is through the displacement of the body that the unveiling occurs.

On the opposite wall, a wreath of ivy trimmed in the park of the Foundation and replaced after each desiccation, hangs from a carpenter's nail planted 183 cm (72in) from the ground. The preceding wreaths lie below the nail. A manifestation of circular time, unhooking the crown and putting it on announces the imminent end of the power of the individual performing this gesture. On the perpendicular wall to the left, a silent hand-held still shot of a young person's face enunciating a written piece that is not revealed, fills the available space. *Video*, meaning "I see" in Latin, is one of the three productions for the exhibition *Panique au dancing*. Choreographed, the message is based on the attention paid to the movements of the lips of the performer. While observing the wreath, visitors stand between the video and a giant installation located a little further away, upon which a visitor may well be leaning. In the continuity of the theater leg curtain which divides the room, a 136 cm x 85 cm x 60 cm (53in x 33in x 24in) stack made of twenty-two blocks of aerated concrete measuring 63 cm x 15 cm x 25 cm (24in x 6in x 10in) each, some of them broken, occupies the back of the room, below the corridor's embrasure, leaving only a narrow passage to move around. Discovered in the groves of the park where it was left behind after a film shoot at the site, this stack was transported and placed here in the exact same orientation (northeast-southwest axis). The back of the stack blocks the corner of the room and prevents anyone from walking around it; it can be seen by leaning out from the corridor. The imperfect regularity of the stacking of the blocks in the park, followed by a prolonged exposure to the elements, has marbled the initial whiteness of the material with grey, ivory, and green, and still bears traces of the foliage that used to cover it until now. The aesthetics of this architecture of oblivion that allows one to linger in front of *Video* has everything to do with its neglect. Following, or in opposition to visitors passing between these blocks and the curtain, they recognize the succession of openings running across the ground floor of the MABA. In the deep indentation formed with the wall by the curtain, A3 sheets (11x17 tabloid/ledger) stacked upon each other are held above ground at 160 cm (63in) by two pebble magnets. The reason for the silhouettes appearing on the curtain and the manifestation of a forthcoming imperative, visitors, residents, and staff of the Maison nationale des artistes discover each week, posted in this nook the meal plans that will be served to them in two weeks.

Emerging from this angle where visitors must alternate, the small square room where visitors next enter is windowless. The French window overlooking the park has been blacked out. Two cross-beam projectors illuminate the white walls. Transported with wheelbarrows poured progressively on its ground, the earth of the excavation of one cubic meter (1.3 cubic yd) carried out in the park, formed a mound that visitors here circumvent or stride over. This heap, which originally inverted geological temporality by making the deepest sediment visible and covering the most superficial,

Description of

undergoes alterations during the course of the exhibition that give it new meanings and gradually spread it out in space.

From this room, one enters a white, luminous room of similar ratio but four times larger.

As they cross the doorway, visitors hear a shrilling sound. A rough ceramic cicada from a licensed artisan workshop was pierced in its thorax and fitted with a light-sensitive cell connected to a sound device placed inside its hollow body. Positioned at the height of a door peephole in the corner of the room's southwest wall, the otherwise invisible artifact is triggered when something passes in front of it and emits a rhythmic squeaking sound, informing visitors that other visitors are in the exhibition, unless they somehow dodge the beam of light. This element is one of the three creations made for the exhibition. Here, it manifests one of the possible modes of inscription of dance and performance in exhibition halls and museums. These conditions can indeed consist in activating the performance only when visitors are in the space, or, as in the theater, in communicating in advance the dates and times of the performance. They can also consist in activating the work during the venue's opening hours, whether or not there are visitors. This option, which distinguishes between exhibition and performance, and accepts the effects of moving a practice from one setting to another by exposing them, is the one that les gens d'Uterpan have historically assumed and have contractually agreed upon with their performers.

In the center of the room, a statue of 172 cm (68in) placed on the floor shows a young woman standing, dressed in a tunic fitted in antique style and raising her arms in a particularly well rendered swing of the whole body. Her hair is tied back with a double ribbon in a krovilos bun. She holds a distaff or a scalp (?) in her left hand, her attention plunging towards the ground on her right. Covered during its last restoration in 2002 in Napoleon III green, emblematic of Parisian street furniture, this statue made of cast iron and featured in the exhibition visuals in its previous appearance, is unsigned and unlisted. On loan from the city of Nogent-sur-Marne after unresolved research into its origin, followed by lengthy negotiations, it was transported as is from the Watteau Municipal Park to the exhibition, with its marks of unauthorized interference and graffiti. In its place in the park, a document indicates where it can be seen and how long it will be gone. Where stands a statue, there is instantly a question of choreography. This renewed irruption of public space into the private enclave of the Fondation des Artistes echoes an event in the history of the site that is reported in the exhibition brochure. Facing the corner of the room where *Tino* the cicada is standing, another blue arrow identical to the one seen in the lobby is mounted on the wall. Visitors realize they could just as easily have started reading the exhibition from this space had they entered the corridor from the left. All the window blinds of the room are up, and the spotlights enhance the ambient light by reflecting against the walls.

To leave this space, visitors can choose to enter the corridor that leads back to the reception area or continue on the narrow passage which follows. Like a crossroads in the old house, this passage, beyond which the anthracite floor gives way to a period floor of grey-beige limestone slabs, connects the western and eastern parts of the building. Today, it is the introductory piece of two layouts and two atmospheres of the MABA. In this anteroom, at the back of the alcove which mirrors a French window opening onto the park, a circular pane of glass was fixed to a hole measuring 42 cm in diameter (16.5in) cut into the wall 110 cm (43in) above the floor. This porthole allows visitors to see beyond the crown moldings. A few centimeters away from them,

Description of

ancient stone steps lead down to the foundations of the house. Across from these steps, a pipe covered in silver cloth is illuminated by a neon strip that extends from a tunnel leading off to the right. Another cast-iron pipe, overtaken by corrosion, emerges from the earth and the rubble. A small wooden pallet is leaning against the old stone wall.

The presence of visitors at this particular point of the building, brings together the organic, historical, and narrative timeframes that support the entire residency project of les gens d'Uterpan.

From the room with the pile of soil, visitors could catch a glimpse of their silhouette reflected in a rectangular shape standing at the very end of the succession of rooms. Once in front of this shape, visitors full body is reflected in a chromed metal plate measuring 199 cm X 132,5 cm (78in x 52in) leaning against the wall, which completes the ground floor. Placed in a perpendicular position with respect to the five stone steps that lead up to the vestibule, this plate found on the site contains information inscribed in white letters regarding the 2011 MABA programs. Pivoting by a quarter, it is read from the bottom up in the same way as the body of the subject reading this information. The History of power directed and laid down over the horizontality of its writing, now and for a while conforms to the verticality of the living that, at this moment, activates the exhibition. At this point, visitors can choose to either go out and discover the park through the double glass door that opens onto a staircase whose flight of stairs leads to the meadow—there one can see white chairs set up as if for a performance, or to climb the five stone steps leading to the vestibule.

Stepping out into the garden, visitors become aware of the immensity of the park opening up before them and are confronted with the dark green of its groves, the monumental size of some of the trees that stand out, and the light green of the carpet of grass that slopes down towards the Marne. On their right, they discover the succession of facades of the main house on the garden side, and at the end of the park an old brick dovecote, gauging the substantial portion of the park that the residents of the adjoining retirement home have the leisure to contemplate. On their left, they distinguish a hill where the less bushy park is host to some vines. Beyond this hill appear the upper floors of the buildings that line the road leading down the wall that encloses the estate, towards the Nogent-sur-Marne marina. In front of the visitors, at the edge of the reddish-gray asphalt driveway that runs alongside the main house, a wooden easel directs a blue arrow in the direction of the chair installation located further down in the meadow. Curious or obedient to the command to explore this natural estate which would have been inaccessible to visitors without this installation, they follow the direction provided and continue down to encounter this estate; seeing more clearly as they advance, the regular arrangement of chairs and a tapered pole that seems to emerge from the chairs and points high towards the sky. Consisting of two groups of seats in use at the MABA and the Maison nationale des artistes, two 3-row squares of five chairs have been installed facing each other at a distance of 16 m (17.5 yd) from the other. Oriented northwest-southeast, the arrangement offers a view of the MABA and the Maison nationale des artistes in one direction and a previously unseen clearing in the other. The pole that stands in the middle of the two squares is a 7-meter (7.5 yd) bamboo stalk cut from a bamboo grove that has grown in the heart of the park near a wooden hut built several years ago by one of the resident artists. As visitors approach, they realize the pole is standing out of the square hole left by the cubic meter (1.3 cubic yd) of soil poured into the exhibit.

Description of

Wherever they are, visitors may encounter the third creation produced for the exhibition. *Entropy* assumes the form of two female dancers who come to the exhibition according to the different temporalities that determine their accomplishment, to mutually deplete their energy in the physical resistance as they oppose each other. Evolving freely on the site and inside MABA, *Entropy* protects the visitor's exclusive status as a performer by merely representing the manifestation of a universal process, omnipresent and continuously at work.

If visitors undertake to climb up the stone staircase in the vestibule, they step on a loose slab that makes a dull snapping sound as it settles back into place. This noise is part of the exhibition. A rectangular opening cut in the second theater leg curtain drops down, aligned with the third step of the staircase, directing trajectories so that the action is produced at each passage. Suspended from the wrought iron railing of the balcony that dominates the entire vestibule, the leg curtain increases the theatricality of this venue that used to dramatize the homeowners' social standing with its high ceilings, pilasters, and bas-reliefs that adorn its walls. The opening made in the leg curtain forces some of the individuals entering and exiting to slightly bow their heads.

In the center of the vestibule, slightly off-center on the right, a shiny black string measuring 1283 linear meters (1402 yd), corresponding to the perimeter of the Fondation des Artistes enclosure in Nogent-sur-Marne, is folded into a skein around a slat measuring 460 cm x 6 cm x 3 cm (181in x 2in x 1in), and leans on the cornice that supports the half-moon bas-reliefs 245 cm (96.5in) above ground. A few steps behind the skein which appears to be wet, with some of its black loops reaching the floor, visitors discover through the glass portal the other side of the bench made of colored panels that they noticed upon their arrival in the courtyard. With a sudden breeze and the unwelcome noise coming from the Rue Charles VII, visitors realize that the window on the right of the gate in question is ajar. Kept in this state for the duration of the exhibition by a fastener to prevent any intrusion, the opening instills uncertainty into the installation and dispels any illusion of protection or comfort. As visitors turn left towards the staircase leading to the second floor where music seems to be emanating from since entering the hall, they discover, behind a solid supporting pillar with a radiator, a white shelf measuring 163 cm (64in) in length and 27 cm (10.6in) in width, placed 100 cm (39 in) above the floor, whereupon a white plate with five eggs is placed. As performers-art pieces in this exhibition, visitors question further the possibilities of action and self-censorship that this exhibition summons. The untouched egg embodies the time that precedes the irreparable act. In theater, disapproval can be expressed by throwing food, eggs, or other things, at the performers. There may already be a broken egg somewhere. The question here is why and against whom the egg is thrown. Each time an egg is missing or broken, it is replaced.

As visitors return to the staircase, their gaze is captured by six square cushions in orange, blue, fuchsia, and black color, arranged on the lower window sill overlooking the entry courtyard. These cushions belonging to the *Méditation* strategy (2013) transform the window frame into a comfortable window seat, inviting the viewer to defer climbing the stairs by assuming the viewer's retreating pose and passivity. The upper window panes, located at 145 cm (57in) above the floor, are coated with blanc de Meudon-whiting and require visitors to lean in to observe what is happening on both sides of the window.

Description of

The music visitors hear gradually gets louder as they reach the first floor, awakening the excitement that comes with reaching a party venue. Like the unsealed slab in the list of elements compiled alphabetically in the exhibition brochure, an unworn motorcycle glove found in front of MABA rests on one of the stone steps of the staircase. Often brought back to the reception desk by visitors, the glove is returned to the step. The glowing red light bathing the entire staircase emanates from the large window on the first floor which has been fully equipped with projector filters. Referenced 106, this red color frequently associated with the iconography of desire, gives the moment and the view of the sky and garden the foreboding accent of day of apocalypse. Carried throughout the day by the movement of the sun, the carnation color travels across the interior space and then appears at a given moment on the asphalt floor of the yard through the window below. As visitors turn away from the vision to head for the balcony overlooking the vestibule, they discover a new blue arrow on the left. It is located on the mezzanine floor, above the radiator that can be seen behind the gate that separates the MABA spaces from those of the Maison nationale des artistes. Facing west again, the arrow points to the corridor that leads to the retirement home, a section of the building closed to the public. From the balcony, visitors look out over both the visitors who pass by in the vestibule and by turning around, over the squares of chairs installation from the large French window overlooking the park.

A double door but nevertheless narrow allows access to the last exhibition hall of the MABA on the east side.

Preserved after the renovation of the Smith-Lesouëf library, which can be seen through the three courtyard windows, five square-based banisters of 54 cm x 18 cm x 18 cm (21.5in x 7in x 7in) occupy the space. Similarly built as the banisters replacing them on the terrace at the top of the library, these have distinguished themselves through years of usage, then through their abandonment against a wall. They are arranged orthogonally on the light wood floor of this large living room where, according to archive photos, very joyful and entertaining *soirées* were organized. The group is a perfect example of spatialization rendered by five performers of les gens d'Uterpan during the activation of certain protocols and is made complete by the regulatory fire extinguisher in the room. Standing in a base placed on the floor, the same size as the bannisters, the group forms with them the emblematic quorum of the performances presented in a museum setting or institution. The spatial arrangement of the ensemble conditions and regulates the visitor's path through the lounge. Carried away by the background music set resounding in the entire hall, most visitors indulge in a tentative movement or apropos dance moves. In the center of the living room, hangs a chromed steel *pétanque* ball identical to the one arrested on the slope. The light emanating from the six windows that open onto the courtyard and onto the garden increases tenfold the brilliance of this sphere hanging from the steel wire that holds it 60 cm (23.5in) above ground. Irresistibly attracting the visitors, the ball traces orbits and trajectories independently of the music but rather influenced by the stimuli that visitors inevitably give it, preserving for a time the trace of their passing presence the lounge.

Placed prominently on the shelf of the lounge's Bardiglio fireplace, a loose A4 (letter-size) sheet of paper reads the missive written by Madeleine Smith to Jean-Jacques Henner, included in the exhibition brochure, and whose liaison is mentioned in the MABA archives. Its content reads as follows:

Description of

"My beloved Master, do not think that I am crazy. Since I have known you, I have felt a passion for you that has become a form of adoration. You have been good to me like no one has ever been. You have spoken to me like no one has ever spoken to me before. I slowly grew to think only of you, to live only for you. I would like you to know that. Don't reject this confession, please have a little mercy. I am writing to you with the permission of Mother, who knows all about my misery. I would like to know if I mean anything to you. If you don't write, you will never see me again. I beg your pardon for bothering you like this. You are everything to me and I am so small. Anything you would have me do, I will do it..."

Facing this extremity of the house, readers turn their backs to the lounge and stand facing the park that they discover from this remarkable round-headed bay window that surmounts the fireplace.

Leaving behind the printed material and realizing that they are going to retrace their steps, visitors may realize that an element of the installation listed in the brochure could not be found and addressed. It is the *location of an untraceable painting*, whose history is also recounted in said brochure. Visitors would have seen it immediately had they chosen to turn left into the corridor at the outset. Its location is there, across from the truncated recessed window that looks out under the reception canopy. This painting, whose size could not be precisely determined, is identified by a white rectangle painted at chest height and reproduces the dimensions of the window frame before it on the black corridor wall.

Choreographic composition drafted

in the exhibition by Océane Meunier from recordings made at the Maison nationale des artistes

As a family, at this generous buffet meal taking place in this large illuminated golden room, where a warm and classic atmosphere reigns, guests decide to get up from their chairs all at once, then turn around, move forward, one step, then another, and so on, to find themselves in the center of the room.

They turn around gracefully, then run at full speed, then stop, facing each other, by only a few centimeters. They stare at each other, one dancer wobbles for a moment, another dancer follows, and then comes back, standing straight as an arrow. He turns around next and starts to hop around, leaping at a steady pace on each leg, one after the other, similar to the subtle trot of a dressage horse you cannot stop watching.

Our captivated eyes follow his movements, until he stops, neatly, and silently. His arms open, blossoming, as he turns his head to the right, and slowly extends his leg.

And suddenly, the other guests start spinning around again, dancing on one foot, then on the other, with enthusiasm.

The whole scene is reflected in the ceiling mirror, and we are reminded of a gigantic living mural, wonderfully radiant in its energy and beauty.

Some of the dancers leave the room as the music speeds up and end up outside under the dark night, on a wooden floor that creaks under their frenzied steps, while something or someone nearby seems to be watching them.

A playful little girl rushes to the stage and wiggles frantically, smiling, while a pianist is going wild on his piano.

The little girl's energetic gestures quickly become infectious and invite everyone to wiggle, move, and dance with her.

Someone jumps down from a tree, next to the wooden stage, and joins her. Their steps are spontaneous, do not necessarily have any logic to them or proper rhythm, but what matters is the intention that is placed in them, making everyone dance.

We do whatever we want, we jiggle, we shake our heads, we play with our feet following the rhythm of the music, we feel light, we jump over small imaginary obstacles. We move, we dance as we like, as we feel. We might be a child wriggling easily or be a hundred years old and no longer feel the flexibility of our body as it becomes numb, but letting this catchy rhythm carry us away and the moves come to us naturally. Our body is no longer curled up on itself, we unfold it, we move it, we possess it, or it possesses us. We may master it; it all depends on the dancer.

Our limbs easily become active in this atmosphere, this collective dancing wave carried by an impalpable but very present vitality; diffused in the air like stardust electrons dispersing and settling on each dancer, each spectator, as if to connect them to one another, inviting them to be part of the show that is happening on the wooden stage.

Composition

Emerging from this madness, a dancer steps off the stage and walks away, disappearing into the darkness of the night. She is hardly visible as her human form morphs to resemble a wild feline, moving on all fours while breathing deeply.

The form moves away, walking on the silent grass, until it reaches the forest, then stops, watches the branches of the trees sway in the noisy wind.

The feline figure then proceeds to follow the movement of the branches, swaying slowly to one side, then to the other, following their rhythm, as though the wind were directing its movements.

The beast seemingly out of strength, is seen from afar in this nocturnal twilight, an animal reaching the end of its life. One may wonder whether its movements are voluntary or involuntary, for its swaying is slow, calm, despite the breath of the restless wind; as though one had drawn out the faintest flame of life left in it, to plunge it into this dark universe that seems to the feline figure so mysteriously infinite.

Across the way, on the wooden stage, the little girl is gone, but the pianist keeps on playing a new melody, slower, hypnotic, and full of emotion, which a pair of dancers tries to convey on the stage by moving to the melodious rhythm that transports them.

They swirl slowly, spread out their arms to reach for the other as if trying to catch them, in a delicate gesture.

They dance together, pull away, then move closer, with a subtle, almost hesitant shyness that holds our gaze.

The ensuing harmony seems perfect and at the same time awkward, but so lovely that it is hard to look away.

They dance, like nothing else exists around them. They dance, in the galactic void of the dark night. Where time no longer exists, eludes us. Where the stars continue to delight us.

Both dancers look at these small sparkling dots, acting as miniature spotlights on their barely lit stage.

During this dance, their senses are awakened: touch, smell, hearing, sight...

Stars shine on them as though they were the only ones left on Earth. Everything else is turned off, asleep, dark, imperceptible.

Time seems to slow down around them, but no matter, they no longer notice...

Let's circle around them, as we would with a camera lens: they seem to shine under the starlight.

Let's move closer...

They are not distracted as we watch. They continue to dance, with sweeping, elegant gestures, then slowly rotate their wrists as a guitarist begins to play, with an enchanting, almost disconcerting ease and freedom.

Yet her fingertips move quickly, lightly touching the guitar strings, giving us the impression that she is brushing against them.

The movement is smooth and releases a melody that seems complex in the execution of its notes, but so beautiful to listen to.

Composition

One of the two dancers opens their arms and extends their leg, then turns their torso so that both arms form a straight line and bends forward, then slides their foot in a circular motion to the right. The dancer then straightens her torso by raising her arms to the sky, spins around twice and then stops to extend her arm to the right side while turning her head to the same side, repeating for the left side, slowly, watching her fingers softly open as she moves.

She watches as she raises her arm, balances on one leg, while stretching the other leg further back, in a controlled movement of unique refinement. The dancer is precise and stares so far ahead that it is hard to know if it is to concentrate or because she is deep in thought.

She then folds up her arm and her leg, until she is curled up on herself, then unfolds her whole body, her legs, her arms, slowly, expanding, blossoming like a sunflower in the sun but the latter is replaced by the stars above her, who would find herself in complete darkness without them.

She looks at the stars, turning her head towards each of them, walks around the stage where she is dancing, then stops and bows to the stars in a final bow before ending her nocturnal show which seem to pay homage to the stars; to this cosmic and scintillating immensity that surrounds us.

When the dark and deformed lump comes out of the forest, it is now daylight. And then the body of the dancer coming out of the woods straightens up and becomes human again...

Other dancers join her, hopping and propelling themselves on their feet as though they were flying. The slippery grass under their bare feet doesn't make them fall. They open their arms, imagining they have big, beautiful, powerful wings. They feel light, moving in all directions around the dancer who watches them and feels drawn by their dynamic energy and the freedom in their movements and trajectories.

They look at each other, smiling, then move closer and climb on top of each other to form acrobatic figures. Their gestures are quick, and seem so simple, for anyone to perform, as we have no time to see their muscles working or wavering. Watching them come down from their human pyramids, we get the impression they are stepping down a human staircase; then they spread out again across this great green and undulating plain.

Some climb up a large hill and roll down, diving down, rolling down the slope, and then do it again.

Meanwhile, the dancers who were bustling about on the plain begin to gradually slow their movements, up to a complete stop, and then kneel to lie down on the grass to regain their strength, while looking up at the sky, breathing peacefully.

They stretch on their backs as much as possible, with the elastic flexibility of a cat just waking up. Then they roll onto their sides, landing on their stomachs, then stretch again, and stand up, suddenly trotting to join the other dancers already lining up next to each other holding hands, forming long human chains. Then, after a while, dancers at each end of the chains join to create large circles that come to life when our dancers begin to run, faster and faster, letting go of each other's hands to go on a mad dash, trying to catch up to the dancer in front of them but never succeeding.

Composition

The second circle of dancers runs in the opposite direction, and the third, yet in the opposite direction.

A dancer weaves his way to the middle of the first circle and swirls around, carried away in a whirl of wind and leaves that change color with the seasons.

He grows taller on his legs, like nature awakening in springtime; his arms reach for the sky, opening to the sun like a plant absorbing the summer light. A shadow passes over him, and then, he curls up, recoils into the position of a wilting flower, slowly losing its petals one after the other.

The life of the flower fades away: the dancer is standing but curled up in himself. He does not move anymore, waiting for the cycle to resume its course, for spring to return and embrace him in its dynamics, and to transform him thanks to its flamboyant colors that that pop up on the lush green plain, similar to the pigments of a gigantic spring painting where each dancer could embody a color.

A blue dancer, curled up in himself, could for example, blossom, slowly, gracefully, by stretching his arms with a possession of the body that transports him and overwhelms him.

He allows himself to be carried away with this blue color, as the water from a stream would transport him away, continuously, in a wave of soft and sensitive emotions.

One would then shift from this bluish beauty to the brutality of a red dancer, intimidating and impulsive in the gestures of her muscular arms, throwing sharp punches in the air, while looking the other dancers in the eyes.

As for the green dancers, they remain calm in the face of this brutality, swaying to the rhythm of the wind, observing the scene.

Meanwhile, the yellow dancers decide to respond to the red dancers by dancing joyfully and innocently, twirling around as though they could not reach them in their beaming and naive dance.

The weather is getting cloudy. The clouds darken the sky of an ever-darker gray, appearing opaque, almost palpable. We catch a gust of wind and sand raising our heads. Then the vastness of this desert landscape is revealed, appearing to us infinite, with no limit.

We are left to our own devices, as one dancer, dressed in black, quickly realizes in this intense heat, forcing them to seek shelter from the sun, hidden behind a hood that covers their head and half of their inexpressive face.

Their steps sink into the hot sand. They fumble, under a noisy but not unpleasant wind, until they come upon an old, abandoned house, half buried under the sand.

Their astonishment, as well as curiosity, suddenly made them forget everything else. They proceed to walk around the house, intrigued. But as they approach the windows, they suddenly sink into the sand up to their chest. They lift themselves up with their arms to extricate themselves, without panicking, and easily come out of this entrapment only to find their feet on the ground again. They step back, moving from the shadow to the sunlight, then examine the roof of the house, curiously interested.

Composition

They jump onto a sand dune next to the house, then bend over, allowing themselves to fall and catch themselves off the edge of the roof, their feet dangling in the open. They manage to lean on their elbows to climb onto the roof, and then stand up, head held high, surveying the horizon. Nothing but sand as far as the eye can see, blown away by the restless wind...

The breathing sound against the dancer's ears simply draws them into a strange, slow spiral movement. They close their eyes, not seeing what they are doing, and yet their gestures are flowing and almost sensual in the middle of the sandstorm that surrounds them, and that does not even seem to throw them off balance.

Alone, in this desert, dance becomes the only escape from the surrounding void. They then dance in their dream, eyes closed, and arch their body like the lines of the sand dunes. They are immersed in this landscape which transports them, in this infinite unknown.

They feel very small in the midst of this perpetual sea of sand, and at the same time a solitary giant, on this dilapidated roof.

They wonder where civilization has gone. If it once existed, if it will appear later, or if it is disappearing with them, now frozen, as the wind keeps blowing strongly. But with knees bent and feet firmly planted, they remain unflappable and brave the unpredictability of the wind that is unleashed against them. They stare at a distant point that could miraculously help them find their way back in this nondescript desert.

Are those endless dunes from ancient Egypt?

Our male dancer, or it is a female dancer, has this sensation in their body, in their mind, of having gone back millennia in the past, of having grown a thousand years of age all at once. He does not know. She does not know any more. Everything is a blur, and yet they watch out hoping to find an escape in the distance.

They do not know if this is a mirage, or if it is not.

In their stupor, they imagine some sort of a shiny magic door that they would pass through to find the others and return to the present moment.

They do not know how many minutes, how many hours, how many days, how many months, or how many years have gone by, because they have lost all sense of time and their bearings for a while.

The only remaining solution is to stare at this still point, and coming down from the roof, to move towards the point, to walk on towards this vague point in the distance, like an automaton unable to make any other choice.

Their sinking feet still require some effort from the dancer who grows more and more exhausted with each step they take in this hot and never-ending sand, like an hourglass being turned over and over again, giving the tedious impression of not actually moving forward, of treading water for an indefinite amount of time.

Composition

They see the point in the distance moving away and wonder whether everything they see in front of them, around them, is just an illusion created by their dehydrated mind, clouded on account of heat and fatigue.

They are no longer able to differentiate between the real and the unreal. Their clarity of vision slips away cowardly, and it is no longer reliable. Everything becomes foggy, as though there were mist around their eyes.

They wonder whether they are dreaming,

When suddenly, as they keep walking, tired, staggering and feeling hope fail them, they unexpectedly come to the edge of a sandy ditch leading to a hostile-looking and rocky dark cave. But they see this cave as a chance, a miracle standing in their way, and so they head for it in a last burst of determination, slipping on the sand in their haste.

They are unsteady on their legs, but keep going using all their remaining strength, until they reach the mysterious cave...

Their lair, which seemed dark at first, was not quite so in reality, for as they entered without thinking and continued along, they gradually saw light coming from the bottom of the cave. Then they quicken their pace, in a courageous impulse lasting a few seconds, then stop, barely.

They may have just come close to death in their haste. They do not know how far they are from the ground, but that is not really surprising to them.

Their vision becomes clear and lucid again as they see the view offered to them:

They are high above the world. Above oceans, forests, cities, and above every other landscape covering this vast Earth. And there is nothing else separating them from this world, except the void at the edge of their feet.

They had no idea such a place existed.

They do not know what they are doing there, but a breath of fresh sea air reaches their nostrils, and they take it all in.

They want to return to that familiar land. But how?

Jump into the void? Find another way out? No, their hope, their future is right in front of them.

They do not want to go backwards.

All of this diversity of colors and landscapes draws them in.

This fascinating Earth pulls them in its direction.

So, they lean, unaware, to look at it, and fall into the void, then continue to fall, without ever landing. Then the dancer realizes that they can steer themselves in the fall, that they can fly, and fly over the oceans, the continents, veering off to change course and trajectory; flying from country to country, from color to color, all connected to each other, and assembled like the pieces of a monumental puzzle composed of all these small colored worlds nested against each other.

And as they fly over these little worlds, they go from climate to climate, from season to season.

And bam, a tornado blows them away in its whirlwind and spits them out. They spin around a bit, in their earlier confusion, then regain control, flying away to new infinite lands.

Composition

They find their bearings thanks to the peaks of the highest mountains when they are caught in the fog and climb back up to find the sunlight.

Hot air balloons enter their field of vision, closer and closer to their face. They evade them, circumvent them by moving away from them. They fly away, pick up height, fly around these colored giant balloons like a jovial bird having just found its object of distraction in the sky. They swim in this intangible fresh air while looking at the scenery offered to them, in all its splendor and its mountainous immensity.

They are flying over lakes, forests, as far as the eye can see, having fun looping through the clouds, going up and down, with speed and dexterity, swirling around and letting the pleasant wind blow against their face.

They would like this feeling of fulfillment and total freedom to last for all eternity, but suddenly, a cold air current blows them away forcefully, making them whirl in all directions.

A storm breaks out around them, behind them. They struggle to regain control of their movements. The wind is too powerful and pushes against them for a long time, while the raging waves of the ocean are getting bigger and bigger, turning into gigantic waves, as if reaching for them, as they fly, splashing them in the process.

Their drenched clothes stick to their body and burden their movements they become exhausting and disorienting. They do not know where they are anymore. They can no longer find their way through the dark and stormy sky.

Is this night time? Is this day time? They do not know; they do not know anymore.

And as if adding to the difficulty, hailstones start hitting them, making them lose altitude abruptly. And to go back up, they lack courage and strength, in this wind, in this rain, in these harsh and cold hailstones biting their body.

The temperature is dropping steadily, as a new air current sweeps them ever farther away, making them swirl and then enter an icy blizzard, freezing their eyelashes.

They can feel their frozen body getting stiff, yet they continue to fly despite all the puzzling, discouraging, exhausting weather.

They do not give up. They do not know where they are going, but one thing is for sure, they are going, they want to go, they want to get out of this blizzard that freezes their muscles, that hinders them, limits them, stalls them as a dancer, frustrates them from being able to move their arms, their legs, their feet, their hands, their fingers.

The cold seems to put them to sleep, making them lose all strength.

They just have this sensation, of being a frozen and inert mass falling from the sky indefinitely, and then returning to a solid state, like a drop of water going through the blizzard.

They are now part of the landscape. They are nothing more than a large falling hailstone, and they wonder whether the blizzard will ever end, as their eyelids begin to close from fatigue and from the wind freezing their veins blue.

Losing hope in this harsh winter hurricane, they can barely open their eyes, they can't move.

Composition

There is nothing they can do to escape. They can only hear the angry wind against their ears. Gradually, they feel their last breath of life being swallowed up by the blizzard. They do not know if their heart is still beating, but it doesn't feel like it. Every cell in their body slow-moving, ready to quit when their blood can no longer flow through their veins. What will become of them then? An ice cube turning into water? Water collected by a lake? A human being forgotten and taken by this universal source of life? Maybe it's a peaceful end, after all, our dancer reflects as they drift off to sleep in the cold.

But there is something, behind these closed eyelids, like a presence, warming them from afar. A soft light looms on the horizon, calling them, begging them to use every last ounce of strength to open their eyes, to raise their head, feverishly, while the wind continuously whips their cheeks. They still cannot see very well through the thick white clouds, this source of hope. As though something was waiting for them, far away. A sunny outing which, in the present moment, would solve the situation, warm their frozen skin, give them strength and courage to face every other kind of mishaps, during their dizzying and challenging exploration.

The warm sunlight coming through the clouds to reach them gives off a gentle warmth they would like to experience for as long as possible, so that their muscles thaw and help reach this source of warmth that is guiding them through the blizzard. They would like to reach out to the source to get out, but it is impossible. So, they keep going, to try and reach the source by plunging head first in the clouds, with snow clouding their vision. But they keep their eye on the source, and move forward, forward, forward, again and again, as the light begins to shine on them more and more. The light source seems to offer a way out, giving them the impression of a mirage in the distance that can be reached, with a little more perseverance. The wind jolts them, but gradually, their face and neck warm up gently, as do their shoulders. They move their head slightly and try to do the same with their shoulders, then their arms, still tight, frozen on each side of their body.

They finally broke through the snow, and a touch of sunlight travels down to half of their arms, which are gradually thawing. They shake their body to try and release their arms bound by the ice; suddenly scared as they imagine them breaking. They pause for a moment, breathing fast, then start moving their arms more slowly, but this time free themselves from the ice that was imprisoning them, and opening up in a breast-stroke movement to try to move forward, to come out of the blizzard that is already behind them. They shuffle through the white clouds as the angry wind continues to pull them back. But they push on their arms and carry on, feeling the rest of their body thaw. And yes, it is not practical to have frozen legs weighing them down. This why the sun, even from far away, is vitally important if they want to avoid being frozen and return to a solid state for the rest of their life.

Composition

They feel as though they are gambling with their life right now, betting on this light to warm them up, and finally reactivate their wiring. They wonder what title they would give to this sequence of constrained movements. Will this dance be their last? Will it be the one? So, this is what a dance of destiny looks like? Is it just a long and relentless struggle with chaos as a rival? Will they be able to make it to some exit? Is there actually a way out? What they see in the distance, before their own eyes, is it real, or is it a figment of their imagination combined with fatigue?

Yet all seems so real: they are eager to reach this exit. It is bound to be more serene than the chaos behind them. Besides, is the chaos really behind them? They still feel it but do not want to turn around. They are focused on the outcome, and on the fulfillment inspired by the calming white clouds and the warm sunlight. It is like an accessible dream, with no time nor space limits, where the impossible becomes possible, in the unknown of this sunny haze and of this incommensurable sky above their head.

Reading

The description of Panique au dancing is read in the park on July 3, 2022, by Guy Prévost, on the occasion of the Jardins ouverts 2022

Photo: rouge

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Photography: Josselin Aupert
les gens d'Uterpan (p. 32)
Achim Reichert (p. 8)

Panique

au

dancing

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