

# art press

JANVIER 2020 BILINGUAL ENGLISH / FRENCH

**HANS HAACKE INTERVIEW**

LARS FREDRIKSON REBECCA HORN

PHOTOGRAPHIE : L'IMAGE AU DÉFI

PRIMITIVISMES INTERVIEW DE PH. DAGEN

ARCHIVES DE LA CRITIQUE D'ART : 30 ANS

FÉMINISMES ! COLLECTION VERBUND

KÄTHE KOLLWITZ FRÉDÉRIC PAJAK

**PETER HUJAR**  
**DAVID WOJNAROWICZ**

473

CAN 13,60 \$CA - USA 13,99 \$US  
DOM 9,20 € - PORT CONT 9,20 €  
BEL, ESP, ITA 8,90 €  
CH 15,60 FS - MARGC 85 MAD

M 08242 - 473 - F: 7,10 € - RD





## Constance Nouvel Photo as Box

The Constance Nouvel exhibition *Réversible* concludes a cycle of three exhibitions offering three approaches to photography that open up space and time and blur the boundaries between reality and its representation. From 19 January to 5 April at the Centre Photographique d'Île-de-France in Pontault-Combault.

Constance Nouvel invites us on a journey. She opens doors, those of perception and imagination, but also those lodged at the heart of the real, which allow us to go from one place to another, traversing the seasons too. The artist combines space and time and builds bridges (or tunnels, or corridors) to pass between the worlds that she develops and builds using photographic images (landscapes and interiors), decors, images of decors, wall installations, constructed objects that examine the real.

The exhibition *Réversible*, opening at the Centre Photographique d'Île-de-France (CPIF), is the third part of a cycle conceived as a re-

search project; a way to explore, almost literally, what photography is for Nouvel, considering the exhibition space as a laboratory or a studio put into perspective. There is no fumbling here though, as the intention, like its installation, is highly constructed.

### A DIFFERENT SPACE

The cycle began in February 2019 in the Parisian gallery In Situ – Fabienne Leclercq, with an exhibition entitled *Atlante*, continued in June 2019 at contemporary art centre Le Point du Jour in Cherbourg with *Solstice* and ends with *Réversible* at the CPIF: three times, three places, three approaches to photography from the same vocabulary that is reconfigured or transformed from one place to another, transmogrified by displacement. There are images of mountainous or desert landscapes, roads, maps, clouds, interiors with curtains and veils, stage curtains and decors, an aquarium, dioramas, slightly twisted white grid on black, texture, carpet ..., but also architectural supports, painted walls. Sometimes the image continues beyond the frame, by a drawing on paper or on the wall, which disrupts its status. The images are found from one exhibition to another, but modified in their format, or in their presentation. Nouvel plays with clues, marks. Developing a work of quotations and referrals from a repertoire of images, she offers an interplay of sets. She superimposes worlds by levels and deploys them in space.

The images respond to one another, echo one another, are re-arranged, reconfigured in space in a sometimes illusionist game. But it's not a semblance, it's a different reality. A wink rather than a trick, she says. An *unhanging*. The capturing and staging of reality introduces a different space, in the sense that Michel Foucault understood it.

*Atlante*, the first exhibition, is about the idea of a world, a story and a game organized like a garden. As part of the continuity of Luigi Ghirri's work, which is where she got her title, she organizes mental projection and physical displacement, the map and the landscape. *Solstice* introduces temporality and light, narrative, a narrative that passes through sensations. A close-up of carpet becomes an abstract image. A wall invites to see beyond. To some metamorphosed images are added textures, materials, sequenced images.

*Réversible*, the third component, is a construction from the first two stages of this journey, a construction that is like a game, play and interplay. And the game is preponderant. It allows the deconstruction of the real to open a field of possibility, it has the capacity, as thought through by Donald Winnicott, to create an intermediate space between external realities and internal realities. The real encloses (or is it its representation?). It is then necessary to open the space that is given to us, to divert it, to foil it in order to allow other passages.

### EXPANDED FIELD

In her studio Nouvel creates scenarios with models of the places she occupies, placing in them miniatures of pictures. She moves from the plan to the model and the model to the real space with a flat plan that induces narration. The simulation fully integrates the work process. She approaches the margins of the image, paints black a wall that becomes a frame or decor or continues the image in pencil and it is of little importance that the regimes of images are diverse, continuity leading to a narrative. The artist relates things (about our way of seeing the world and representing it to ourselves) with the images and doesn't allow herself to be swayed by what reality or perspective imposes on us. One picture of a decor plays on the ambiguity of what we see when the same scenery viewed from another perspective reveals the artifice. From one to the other, there is displacement, which makes the spectator active, mobilizes them in the exhibition space, which is also that in the image. When moving from a surface to a volume, one enters the image. Nouvel thus extends

« Un monde, une histoire, un jeu ». 2019. Installation photographique. (Ph. Aurélien Mole)

the spectrum of photography and inscribes it in a larger spatial and temporal set-up. The boundaries between what is in the image and what is outside are blurred, outlines are less clear between the decor and the real, between the real and its representation.

By her singular work, Nouvel actually moves her medium by exploring all the potentialities of the image. She has moved beyond modernism and post-modernism and beyond artistic photography. She explores here literally what could be called, using Rosalind Krauss's expression, the *expanded field* of photography. Is it a spatialization of photography? Perhaps. Rematerialization? Objectification? No, probably not, especially since Nouvel's references come from the photography of Luigi Ghirri and Lynne Cohen, from the world of video games, and from a quasi-science-fiction literature ranging from Abbott Abbott Edwin's *Flatland* to Adolfo Bioy Casares' *The Invention of Morel*, by way of the cinema, with *Last Year in Marienbad*, indeed based on that book. What drives her, literally what sets her in motion, are these circulations from one medium to another, from the book to the film, from the image to the decor, from the studio to the exhibition space, from the real to its

double. Photography is equally image, reproduction of reality, scenery, reality itself. The viewer thus circulates between reality and its image and becomes the character of uninhabited spaces, in a beautiful and enigmatic universe.

Though it isn't necessary to have seen the two previous exhibitions to see the latest one – the three answer each other without depending in any way on each other – it is nevertheless singular to experience these modulations of the work, this elasticity of images implemented in different combinations and variables of adjustment. If each exhibition is a step, *Réversible* isn't the conclusion of the cycle, but the moment when the cards are reshuffled. From the In Situ gallery to CPIF, a loop is looped. Space and time together. Winter, summer, winter. But also a loop of the work of the photographer herself, from conception to realization, from the mental box to the optical box, from the optical box to the studio and from the studio to the box of the exhibition space. And back. Walls become an image, the place of a projection of the imagination. All remains to be shown of the strangeness of the reality we have before us and in which we live. ■

Translation: Chloé Baker

