

## **AIR DE PARIS**

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La retour de la vache qui rit

"Les Ateliers du paradise", Air de Paris, Nice, 1990

"Les ateliers du paradise" ("The studios of paradise") changed the order of representation, while introducing elements of game-playing, irresponsibility and pleasure. Yet all of this was framed within a critical structure that was apparent rather than coy, calling to account the potential of a reframed model of exhibition making. While each artist who worked together on the show has found their own path subsequently, the moment of "Les ateliers du paradise" was the culmination of a number of temporary excursions into re-newed collaborative strategies by all involved. All this alongside the reordered contextulisation that was a product of the curator school at Le Magasin in Grenoble, which had produced Florence Bonnefous and Edouard Merino (Air de Paris), Esther Schipper (Schipper und Krome), Louise Neri (Parkett) and Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster. What they did has become normalised within the relative re-structuring that has accompanied new attempts to find ways to pass (art)time, but at that point, some time in 1990, "Les ateliers du paradise" introduced an element of excess, function and just hanging around that was stark yet convivial.

Memory of the recent past is always shaky, and for a magazine issue such as this, it might be good to try and retain the shimmering mind faults that play with the amnesiast.

Cut back nine years. Sitting in London, it seemed a good moment to leave the city. And someone said "Let's drive to Nice". Or this version. There had been a card, and the card was the same size as a credit card. It was blue with some artist's names: Philippe Parreno, Pierre Joseph, Philippe Perrin and maybe Bernard Joisten. Or maybe not Bernard Joisten.

A car arrived at the apartment. So then the build up begins. Not like turning a corner on leaving the underground and heading straight into a gallery, but more like driving for two days to arrive unannounced and see if there is anything behind the card.

Cross France, north to south via the mountains instead of the quicker "auto route du soleil". Over the top and down the other side, maybe in high summer. Burning arms. Then as the pretty direct route makes the last final left turn into the old town, the driver looks the wrong way. I am the passenger and just reach for the hand-brake. To my surprise it works and stops us short of a side-swipe.

The back streets of Nice are cool and stinky. Cool relative to the rest of the place in summer. The gallery, Air de Paris, has no clear designated

zones. It is not immediately apparent who are the artists and who are the dealers and who are the critics and who are the curators. Small cameras are free and allow you to record your own images. A few shots on each role have already been taken by the artists. There must have been a list shortly before the opening. Some things required to spend a holiday/exhibition in the sun and cool stink. Japanese lessons; credit cards; some Gautier (hmmm); computer games (ah); precisely chosen furniture (an early appearance of a Panton-eque aesthetic in a gallery context); and some art by others to add to the pleasure. Sofas and drinks and precise instructions from expert chefs. A climbing wall. A year before Matthew Barney, some artists in Nice were spending time carefully pulling themselves around the gallery without ever touching the floor, but without the pedestrian earnestness of performance timing, just in order to stave off boredom and find new ways to entertain each other. A re-ordered social space. A sense in which time is becoming an issue without the use of time based media. There is no video documenting the artists. This is something to take part in. And you could take part just by turning up and doing nothing.

Sitting later in a nearby house, people ate tripe. There would be the whole trip back to re-consider the potential of potential. A film in real time had been created, through the application of theory that only existed elsewhere as a way to justify another re-worked formalism. There was a line that I remembered which had come with a smile in response to a report from London. "Why would you want to do that? We already know what it would produce." A situation where text on film, social structure and politics would be required in order to de-code a set of new behavioural strategies that up-ended the lumpen predictability of the way artists are normally placed in relation to their multiple audiences. And then again, you didn't need any of that to back anything up. In Nice everything was blurred yet the result was an extreme clarity. Now as we are used to taking part in the products of other people's renewed social games, "Les ateliers du paradise" remains engaging. It was a moment of commencement that felt like you were joining something half-way through.

Liam Gillick  
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