

invisibile

Once again the room is empty. A subtle red light bathes the frescoes on the ceiling. When the writing appears on the opposite wall (... Someone comes in / and stops...) you realise it is about you, it is talking to you. Okay, but who is doing the talking?

(... Nobody moves... / Scared...)

*Psychic* by Antoine Schmitt is a creature that can see but is invisible. The space is under surveillance, like in a Panopticon (seeing without being seen) the viewer is in the company of an unreachable eye-presence. The creature is hiding. Although it is simply computer software it possesses sensitivity, intelligence, a personality. The text that slowly appears is a comment to what the creature sees and feels. But there the dialogue stops.

You cannot talk to the creature, only, at most, move around while facing an insurmountable disparity, prey to its gaze and judgement, tangled up in its stream of consciousness... (... Now everybody leaves... / Nobody here...).

The experience of interactivity is composed starting from a fragile equilibrium: a trail on the ridge of a paradox, it interrogates and involves both body and thought while it makes humanity confront its neutralisation (the “inhuman” Lyotard talks about?).

A light and dangerous game on the verge of going adrift, instable intimacy confronting disparity. The strategy of the Invisible.

a state of non-permanence stimulating an empathy with all things ephemeral. An affirmative ephemeral, an energy very dissimilar from the melancholia of ephemeral in the West. An 'ephemeral' representing not only the captured presence of the 'never more' and all the *Vanitas*, but also the seizure of time, its modulations and the different strata in its accepted passage.

This positivity of the ephemeral and the immaterial 'virtuality' of the invisible become possible also thanks to the new interactive technologies, a new form of artificial culture crossing the frontiers of the arts in the art of a globalised time. In fact, if the invisible becomes an event in the dialogue between viewer and device, then virtual time becomes mechanical, potential and simulated. Multiple interfaces develop more and more complex cognitive strategies, and virtual reality is not identified anymore with a mere likeness or a mere 'de-actualisation' of reality. The culture of 'virtuality' is inseparable from a new regime of the image, which I have defined as "image-flux"<sup>4</sup>.

As analysed by Maros Novak, we can identify different stages of 'virtuality': the shadow, the 'cinematics' of the image, the simulation, the immersion and the last one, defined by Novak as "trans-architecture"<sup>5</sup>. This means the virtual programme of architecture and it implies highly sophisticated topological models such as Moebius' stripe, the *Animate Forms* (Greg Lynn), the cartographies of imaginary cities, the *Invisible Cities*<sup>6</sup>. At the beginning the screens are empty in Novak's installation. A camera and a sound feedback system make it possible to touch invisible sculptures and make the shapes, the trans-architectures of the invisible city come to the surface. The screen is like a film of the mind, an envelope, a second skin. And if the skin really is that same Me-Skin (*Moi-Peau*)<sup>7</sup> of the first inscriptions and frontiers of life, then the screen dependent on the touch generalises the regime of doubles and of the duplicates of simple sound tracks (Maebayashi) or of virtual creatures (Schmitt). The 'double' of romantic origin, as a projec-

action in real time (or at least perceived as such). However, it would be a mistake to perceive technology as the central and fundamental feature of this show, and the works in it as the results of a simple application of state-of-the-art researches in the fields of electronics and programming<sup>5</sup>. Quite the reverse, it is often only in function of the realisation of the installation that some artists have, wherever necessary, used sophisticated modern technology. Many works, such as those by Antoine Schmitt or Cristobal Mendoza, do not employ particularly complicated software and do not need high-tech machines to function. Some others are many years old (the first version of Rokeby's *Very Nervous System* dates back to 1986, Jeffrey Shaw's *The Golden Calf* to 1994) or do not even involve the use of cyber ware. This is the case of *The Uncertain Museum*, Olafur Eliasson's special project for *Invisible*: a place made of light, cosy and circumscribed, capable of transforming the given space until its complete annihilation.

The invisibility of the works, their appearance and manifestation at a given signal, or as the consequence of an action whether voluntary or not induces in the viewer a feeling of expectation, of desire. Therefore the "white space"<sup>4</sup> that precedes and later follows the actual perception of a work acquires value, a value that becomes part of the work itself. Those wandering around the rooms that make up the exhibition space bear the responsibility of the success of the entire system, as the indifference, the lack of curiosity, the inability to enjoy the prologue of the show, the "white space", the interval, the suspension, all coincide with a faulty perception or lack thereof. Finally, time as a factor represents a further element common to every installation within *Invisible*, because it is in the duration that the mechanism acts and the plot unfolds revealing the shapes, sculpting the sounds, unfurling the images. A time paced by the works in complete synchrony with our rhythm (HeHe, Shaw) as well as with the introduction of alienating accelerations and evocative relentings (Maebayashi, Boissier).

# antoine schmitt

## *Psychic*

Avec *Psychic*, il s'agit de réaliser une double inversion. D'abord une inversion du mécanisme muséal dans le sens où ici c'est l'oeuvre qui regarde le spectateur. Qui le regarde réellement, avec une caméra, un système perceptif et un système cognitif interprétatif. Le spectateur ne voit que le résultat de ce processus analytique sous forme de symboles: du texte qui le représente, lui, ici et maintenant.

Par ailleurs, il y a aussi une inversion de ma démarche artistique habituelle. Alors qu'en général, je fabrique des pièces dans lesquelles je joue de l'opacité entre causes et effets en détournant la posture scientifique, et où je plonge le spectateur dans une attention et une recherche de causalités, avec *Psychic*, c'est l'inverse. Ici, c'est l'oeuvre qui cherche des bribes de causalités dans le monde qui l'entoure, c'est à dire dans l'espace du musée et dans les allées et venues des spectateurs. Dans une posture quasi paranoïaque, la créature invisible tente de donner sens aux actions qu'elle perçoit.

Dans la continuité de mon travail, *Psychic* est une pièce programmée, dans laquelle les médias utilisés (fragments d'images – les lettres – et fragments de sons) ne servent qu'à permettre un lien entre le spectateur et le processus à l'oeuvre. L'essence de l'oeuvre se trouve dans le mécanisme qui a lieu ici et maintenant. Je cherche à confronter le spectateur à ce mécanisme à travers l'image et le son, émanations discrètes des tourments cachés.

Au bout du compte, le spectateur cherche la cause de ce mécanisme qui lui-même cherche la cause du mécanisme du du spectateur.

Antoine Schmitt - août 2004

*Psychic*, 2004



body here.. just me.

on A comes inside, fast :  
mediately ... stops.