

Franck Ancel

from Scenography to Planetary Network to refresh!

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ABSTRACT

Spectacular and technological, between the historic Avant-Garde and Post-Modernity, Jacques Polier crosses and deconstructs data. Since the scenographic design of his shows is more complex than simply decorating spaces, the theatrical scenes pass from the actor to the avatars, from movement to mathematics, by means of multiple interconnections. Even though he produced his interactive communication games between New York, Tokyo and Cannes by projecting a "Main Machine Interface" in 1985, these 1980s projects are considered utopian. Even so, his Gyroscopic Satellite Room is a perfect opportunity to radically rethink creative space part and parcel of a search outside strictly contemporary limits. Besides, as early as 1962 he thought that "since some actions take place at some very far distances on one hand, some others could equally be contemplated thanks to TV technology. No doubt, the inclination, rotation, orbits and movements of planetary systems make up the actual geometrical structure of a future scenography". So perhaps the progressive integration of technology into his research is at the heart of a new development that is not only part of a modernization of art through a mutation linked to the new media, but also opens up an infinite virtuality.

RULES FOR SCENOGRAPHY

From a very early date, there were signs that Jacques Polier was ahead of his time, he personifies, although perhaps in a manner which is not directly perceptible, the creator of the present-day questioning and manifestations of scenographic and electronic creation. In fact, unlike certain other creators, he harbours the complexity of multiple perspectives. In 1989 Dr. Ladislav Lichka of Bratislava university stated in his work The movement of the theatre that Jacques Polier was an emblematic figure of 20th century theatre. Giovanni Lista, in his encyclopaedia Scene moderne published a few years ago, recalled that "from the mid-1950's, Jacques Polier explored the new technologies, studied the systems of simultaneous projection, devised the most elaborate connections between movement, light, image, space and sound". In Barcelona in 1988, Professor Merce Cunningham of the Institute of the Theatre, stated, with regard to a spectacle by the troupe Futura, that "a supplementary stage in DIS has been obtained through which Jacques Polier has defined as 'absolute virtual movement', a movement obtained by the simultaneity of the real movement of the actors and spectators in space, and of the movement of the virtual images [...]. Thus, action and perception occur in three dimensions, creating changes of perception, optical illusions and visual syntheses [...].". In 1990, Jacques Polier, responsible for the IBM pavilion "Planet of Vision", introduced in the on-line presentation of his project Jacques Polier's definition of scenography: "a set of pictorial, visual, technical and theoretical features which allow the creation of an image, a two or three-dimensional construction, or the setting in place of some action, in particular related to the performing arts". And yet, the diversity and versatility of reviews regarding his art insufficiently cover the work of this scenographer, which is both logical and analytical. At a moment when, thanks to communication networks (data, sound, image), a planetary community is appearing, the projects and achievements presented at the Bibliothèque nationale de France in 2002 reveal the meaning of what could easily be misconstrued. It is a question of deciphering correctly an artistic output which seems, on the one hand, to close the modern era and, on the other, invites us into the third millennium. We are confronted with a living adventure, which attempts to answer what has become standard questions. It opens the road to both the survival and the development of art in the digital age. What are the principal rules governing this scenography? First, Polier becomes aware of the constraints of enclosed locations and their cramped space. As a result, he became interested in the problem of architectural envelopes. He then recognised the correlation between such envelopes and geometrical forms – the formal aspects are identical: Platonic polyhedra (complex polyhedra, convex or concave, rectilinear or curved). The next stage for him was to analyse and understand the variations of installations and the organisational possibilities for broadcasting and receiving messages inside the enclosed form. The problematics or combinatoric of the possible interchanges – left/right, top/bottom, diverse axes – without enclosed locations soon proved relatively restricted. Did the movement inside these hypothetical combinations provide any greater degree of freedom? The kinetic or kinematic study of movements is certainly of great interest in his work, but does not fundamentally call into question the scenographic data. Nevertheless, changing from horizontal dimensions to vertical dimensions, or again from an image seen at 180° to one at 360°, then moving towards an aerial dimension considered as a third dimension transforms and animates the debate. However, the limitation of the enclosed form still remains. How can an interior enclosed space be opened to an infinity, free, exterior space? It is this operation on traditional stage management that we perceive as a Copernican revolution, which unquestionably transforms Jacques Polier into a creator of modern scenography. The "Theatre of Total Movement", conceived as a scale-model as early as 1957 and built in Osaka in 1970 for the World Fair, is certainly the principal element of this historic mutation of which Polier is the actor. And it is from this standpoint that a whole series of productions become comprehensible (Gamme de 7 [Scale of 7], C2/42, L'Oeil Oiseau [The bird-eyes] with Joan Miro, the Ecumenical Pavilion in Montreal, ...), which thereafter attempt, with the help of electronic projections, to breach the surrounding walls and create a passage between the interior and the exterior. They were soon followed by the Video communication games at the Munich Olympic Games, then by other identical events and a publication with the same title presenting the theoretical bases. The question then arose of their congruity with given technology. The passage from mechanical technology to electronics which would end in the interactive planetary videotransmission (New York, Tokyo, Paris, ...): an "Image-Man-Machine" interface.

SCENOGRAPHY AND/OR CONQUERING TECHNOLOGY

In his text Scénographie de l'image électronique [Scenography of the electronic image], dating from 1963, Jacques Polier wrote: "Actions taking place at very great distances from each other could also be envisaged thanks to teletechniques". This position anticipates our present confrontation with new media. However, the achievements of this pioneer do not arise from a concern for modernisation but, rather, raise questions regarding the renewal of different domains of study through inventive practices and theories. Polier numbers among those who promoted the discovery of the historic avant-garde movements. He adapted Mallarmé's texts Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard and Le Livre. He manipulated images and sounds in his spectacle "Sémiographie d'une partition", directed dancers for his ballets "Gamme de 7" and "C2/49", and presided over cameras and microphones during "communication games". His spectacles are detailed through systems of notation and diagrams. He proposed a unique form for the vision of each spectator. By calling on mathematics, he systematised the complexity of his compositions and opened the way towards a different type of performance or "act of fiction". Thereafter, he altered his layouts on the ground and transposed planes using all three dimensions. Some works of this still poorly understood universe encompass aspects which remain to be discovered. In 1970, for the World Fair held in Osaka, Japan, the Theatre of Total Movement, already conceived as model in 1957, became reality thanks to the Mitsui group.

CONCLUSION

In his book What is the Virtual? Pierre Levy, the Frenchman teaching in Canada, explains that, in our digital era, art is no longer about creating a "message" but about devising a machine that gives something still silent the cosmic creativity to allow its own melody to be heard. A new sort of artist is appearing, one who does not tell stories anymore but who is rather an architect of event space, an engineer of words for the millions of stories of the future. Jacques Polier has virtually become, in our eyes, this kind of artist, having introduced the presence of abstract art into spectacles. Given the extent of his work over more than 50 years, it is difficult to mention him so briefly in this paper. In the next new edition in France between now and the end of the year of a review led by Polier, "Spectacle: 50 Years of Searching", which dates from 1988, our paper will demonstrate that Polier is in the tradition of the international, so-called historic avant-garde. Polier calls not just for straightforward modernisation but strives for an even more unrecognised field for our new millennium, one which deconstructs space for representation through action. For Polier, it is therefore not only a question of adding supplementary technology to the electrification of theatres or to the appearance of new sounds in the cinema. He positions himself beyond a (future) "Post-Theatre and Pre-cinema". In addition, the operation of the living on a planetary scale that we know today is probably organised within its limits he has been unable to overcome in his quest for an entirely cosmic dimension towards the infinitely great. Conquering space, in contrast with his research, is only an additional set of themes for contemporary art, in the same way as any other. Similarly, contemporary space-time tries to integrate vast exchange networks and creative happenings which every individual on the planet is subjected to via the computerisation of the world, without questioning the borders of the very place of its representation. Moreover, we referred to this issue in Amsterdam last week in our paper from Scenography to Planetary Network for urban screen. In search of new "exhibition" space. In addition, at the beginning of December in Australia, in our paper from Scenography to Planetary Network for urban screen for performance and play-its, we will present our expectations for an idea for tools and/or instruments for an interface for fully contemporary creations.

SPN

"From Scenography to Planetary Network" is an entity of creations, publications, conferences, installations and performances presented by Franck Ancel, in question over contemporary time: the last creation of 2005, in real time via wireless web, via satellite, at an altitude of 30000 feet, more than 900 kilometers per hour, to Tokyo or Shanghai, in the year celebrating France in China and the exhibition of Aichi in Japan. In the continuation of his triptych AIT in France "Architecture - Image - Technology", these communications prepare for further rendez-vous. Ancel now inhabits the planetary space of technology to fall into and under the reality of the imaginary: a World Fair or a World Tour... like the Solarimpulse plane or like the city of Shanghai between the now and 2010. Running the planet! Europe - Amsterdam 24.09.05 America - Banff 30.09.05 Africa - a date coming soon Oceania - Sydney 02.12.05 Asia - Tokyo or Shanghai end of 2005

SPONSORS

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BIOGRAPHY

Franck Ancel was born in 1970, France. He lives and works in Paris. He has been probing technology for more than fifteen years. He has traced the development from the avant-garde artists of the last century to the recent mutations of creation on a planetary scale. He has thus organized and coordinated symposiums, expositions, and performances in cooperation with associations and institutions. The last one was a retrospective on Jacques Polier, the creator of "modern scenography" at the BnF. Since the attacks of 9/11, Franck Ancel has set up an interactive triptych probing "architecture – image – technology" on 20th century heritage sites. In 2002, he put it in the Le Corbusier/Renée's convent; in 2003 in a classified theater in Catalogne; and in 2004 on the screen of Montparnasse Tower in Paris. Franck Ancel challenges the viewer outside traditional frontiers, by projecting a setting of a network of information on screens. At the same time, he analyzes this technique on a more theoretical level in texts and talks.

WHO IS JACQUES POLIER?

Jacques Polier was born in Toulouse in 1928. Well known as a director, scenographer and french theorist, we owe him the settings of "avant-garde" scene and the construction of revolutionary places for communication and design. Encyclopaedic dictionary universal Small Compact Larousse, edition 2005, Paris.

ILLUSTRATION

Illustration's poster is one perspective view about Polier's project: "Projet d'aménagement pour un lieu planétaire" (Installing a planetary place) in 1968.

RESEARCH

We seek a University Laboratory in partnership with Arts Centers to develop our theoretical analysis.