36 Short Stories

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REFERENCES

36 *Short Stories*, Paris : Bétonsalon-Centre d'art et de recherche : Beaux-arts de Paris éditions, 2017. Sous la dir. de Mélanie Bouteloup

- 1 For some time now, a tendency to “de-specialisation” has been apparent in the art world, decompartmentalising practices and knowledge: some exhibition spaces do not invite only artists; artists, invited as curators, do not only show artworks (theirs or others'); books published in the field of contemporary art discuss anything but contemporary art. In a way, similarly to cultural studies, artists, curators, critics and historians are concerned with everything that happens “on the side”, decompartmentalising disciplines, asking “What does this have to do with everything else?”, a question that one of the founders of cultural studies, Stuart Hall, declared concerned all objects of study without exception.
- 2 One can observe this very phenomenon when reading the publication of Bétonsalon art centre, 36 *Short Stories*. In a rather exemplary way, Mélanie Bouteloup, who frequently programmes artists and researchers from different fields, has put together an anthology that presents texts that for the most part do not discuss artworks or artists (or only indirectly), all the while opening fascinating perspectives for art and artworks. Let us consider for instance Françoise Vergès's article, which offers “to rewrite history from the perspective of the migration of plants, of their transformation as commodities in the colonial and post-colonial/global world, of their influence on our everyday lives and our imagination.”¹ This is a way to deal with objects globally, that allows one to connect art and artworks “to everything else”, to the economic conditions of cotton, coffee, and sugar production for example, as the 2012 and 2013 programme *Les Esclaves au Louvre: une humanité peu visible* [Slaves in the Louvre collection: an inconspicuous humanity] did,

examining Jann Steen's and Antoine Coypel's paintings in a new light, by observing what is shown (new plants) and what is hidden (how they are grown).

- 3 The article by Mathias Danbolt questions the interest of queer feminist production for archives, which proceeds, according to him, from “the equilibrium between the desire to have a history and the fear of being historicised, in the sense of being cut off – metaphorically, practically and systemically – from the present.”² This interest for archives, and more generally for the writing of history, is one of the underlying themes of this collection, and in this sense, it is clearly in line, along with the major tendency to decompartmentalisation of knowledge in different art worlds, with the current concerns of numerous artists, critics, curators and historians. More specifically, and particularly for some artists, this means reactivating private and/or political histories, struggling against the erasure of certain pasts that have been made inaudible or invisible, and reconstructing lives with the help of archives, in order to save their representations from oblivion. The aim is to create a relationship between the construction of the future, the present and different past(s). The significance of this book particularly comes from the attention it gives to unexpected narratives – for example the filmmaker Annie Tresgot's description of her years as a cinema student in Paris at the end of the 1950s, which, in a vivid style, weaves together her love for cinema, the Algerian war and relentless sexism.³ Another interesting point of this collection is that it brings this type of narrative together with fiction and analyses from different horizons, offering, as a whole, a new take on history, not so much in the sense that it reconstructs a univocal past but numerous pasts; as well as an opportunity to revisit unknown or little known pasts which furthermore are sometimes in conflict with one other.⁴ That artists, critics, art historians, curators are participating in this undertaking deserves all our attention.

NOTES

1. Vergès, Françoise. “Comment vivons-nous parmi les plantes ?”, a talk given during the symposium *Ananas connection*, organised in June 2012 at the Museum national d'Histoire naturelle (Paris), and published in *36 Short Stories*, Paris : Bétonsalon – centre d'art et de recherche ; Villa Vassilieff ; Beaux-Arts de Paris éditions ; Ministère de la Culture, 2017, p. 332. Ed. by Mélanie Bouteloup
2. Danbolt, Mathias. « Not Not Over. Mobilisations de l'archive dans l'art féministe queer », published in 2013 in the brochure for the exhibition *Fais un effort pour te souvenir. Ou, à défaut, invente* at the centre d'art et de recherche Bétonsalon, republished in *36 Short Stories*, *Op. cit.*, p. 281
3. Tresgot, Annie. « Du temps de Michèle » (2005), published in 2013 in the journal *La Furia Umana*, republished in *36 Short Stories*, *Op. cit.*, p. 87-93
4. See: Gruzinski, Serge. *L'Histoire, pour quoi faire ?*, Paris : Fayard, 2014.

AUTHORS

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Véronique Goudinoux teaches art history and theory at the University of Lille – Sciences humaines et sociales. In 2013 the Presses universitaires du Septentrion published her book *Œuvrer à plusieurs : regroupements et collaborations entre artistes*. She is currently working on *Collaboration et co-crédation entre artistes : duos, groupes et collectifs en arts plastiques du début des années 1960 à nos jours*, which will be published in December 2017 by Canopé.