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- ¹ Art and literature. These terms reflect a French tradition built at the intersection of writing and the visual arts, particularly painting, drawing, sculpture, photography and film. The synthesis of the arts, starting with the Realist and Symbolist movements, reshaped artistic modernity until the advent of the avant-gardes and Surrealism, by closely associating visual, poetic and narrative practices. Bernard Vouilloux, retracing the history of these interactions, particularly in the 19th century, pointed out a corresponding “artistic turn in literature”.¹ Since this turn, the study of drawings by writers, as well as books and writings by artists, has been constructed through a twofold aesthetic interpretation, which, however, maintains a political distance between the verbal and the visual. In this regard, the book by Annie Le Brun, *Un Espace inobjectif: entre les mots et les images*, weaves its way into this tradition while trying to reduce and evade the distance. Firstly, the relationship between art and literature – which in her writings is rooted in the avant-gardes – takes on a personal dimension which deploys an imaginary of networks and constellations. She then explores, through an unusual approach, what she calls “inobjective space”, which is “neither objective nor subjective” and which ventures into the discontinuities of the encounters “between words and images”. This intermediate space aims to go beyond the binarity of written and visual works, of verbal and fine arts. Narratives – in the widest sense – are not necessarily readable: they are a visual palimpsest. Similarly, images can be absent, thus requiring a Surrealist literary imaginary or its processes. A collection of reviews and lectures, the book revisits encounters: anatomy plates commented by Roger Caillois, the eroticism of Toyen’s paintings – one perceives the assimilation of Surrealist and Sadean texts, of which Annie Le Brun is a specialist, and which are featured throughout

the essays. This interpretation, articulated in the light of texts and books, revitalises lesser-known works of the Surrealist spectrum, such as those by artists Leonora Carrington and Mimi Parent or the poet Radovan Ivšić.

- 2 The dissatisfaction born from the opposition between sign systems and periodisations has led Pascal Mougin to question the convergence of the arts within two historic sequences: the modern and the contemporary. Though his examination of European and American conceptual art's uses of language and poetry, as well as the debates surrounding the definition of literature, he contends that “de-definitions” and “desidentifications”, operated simultaneously by conceptualism and minimalism in art and literature, signal “a new form of aesthetic relationship” determined by the convergence of the arts. It was introduced by the idea of the “Death of the author” formulated by Roland Barthes in 1967. The essay was published in *Aspen's* “Minimalism Issue”, edited by Brian O'Doherty, and represents the tipping point for a “performative” concept of literature. Thus, forms of writing that partake in conceptual processes – which Pascal Mougin names “conceptualisms” – all fall under the same contemporary regime, currently characterised by what franck leibovici has defined as “writing operations”. The historic progression of Pascal Mougin's recent work is introduced by Conceptual art and ends in France with “post-poetry” and the advent of “writing without writing”, the logical consequence of an authorless art which values copy and appropriation – as stated by Kenneth Goldsmith, who is also the founder of the free resource website UbuWeb (ubu.com). In this overview, which extends to creative algorithms, the historic background for writing's “contemporaneity” is shaped by white writing in the style of Robbe-Grillet and the “literality” formulated by Jean-Marie Gleize². This idea participates in the continuity of the aesthetics of the ready-made³, neutrality and documentary, which is echoed by publications connected to these tendencies, as well as exhibition cycles that restage the interactions between poetic, linguistic, and visual creations in the sphere of minor creative practices.
- 3 franck leibovici's essay, *Des opérations d'écriture qui ne disent pas leur nom*, should be read in the same light, through the lens of the literature of the banal, documents, and experimental writing. Through the appropriationist and performing “Goldsmith case”, leibovici re-examines this figure, which materialises a salient dimension of current (non)creativity. The essay is permeated with the presence of the technological gestures and picto-verbal habits that we have acquired over the course of the past decades through the use of screens, digital environments and personal computers. Social and scriptural practices combining texts and images have therefore entered what the theoretician of images W.J.T. Mitchell referred to in 1994 as a “pictorial turn”⁴. W.J.T. Mitchell emphasised the pre-eminence of the culture of images in a connected world, as well as reproducibility technologies. On a broader scale, he questioned the interpretative relationship between reality and language in connection to images, to which franck leibovici added their status as document. This represents an additional influence exerted by the relationships between art and writing and art and literature, towards including the “documental” status and the aesthetics of archives – whose growth Hal Foster noted in the 2000s.⁵ Appropriationist practices are essentially based on the displacement of writing materials and their production contexts, through minimal modifications akin to furtiveness and the infra-thin. Following this logic, one should track down poetic manifestations in “covert writing operations” [*opérations d'écriture qui ne disent pas leur nom*], because they have become transparent and

discarnate: image compilations⁶, samplings, content curating (which expands curatorial activities), text republications (such as *Statements of Facts*, legal hearings read in public)⁷ and even tagging, to name but a few of the examples whose effects on literary imagination are analysed by leibovici.

- 4 The reusing of documents – or archives – has been illustrated for several years by the œuvre of Valérie Mréjen. After having worked with the documentary form and the montage of stereotypical texts, she used postcard pictures to which she combined fragments of correspondences that recount, by lacunar touches, relationships and small everyday events. The catalogue of her exhibition, *Soustraction*, which took place at the IMEC [Institut Mémoires de l'édition contemporaine] in 2019, brings together the montage of fictional documentaries from vernacular pictures and archival objects which belonged to thinkers, writers and critics included in the institute's collection. *Soustraction*, therefore, is simultaneously an artist/writer exhibition, a series of works made from “documental” archives, and a poetic meditation on these insignificant objects: notebooks, calling cards, transport tickets and personal photographs, whose common gesture is to reframe a detail, an extraction.
- 5 These theoretical concerns go hand in hand with the growth of literary and visual productions at the intersection of the arts, which partakes in the current demands for the recognition of an artist/author status. The performative turn in literature and art, in the sense of the artistic performance, does indeed indeterminate the role of poetic creators and artist/authors. The old debate, which one would already come across at the time of *photographie plasticienne*, and which was materialised by the exhibition *Ils se disent peintres, ils se disent photographes* (22 November-4 January 1981), merges with the issues of artistic literature, a literary practice which claims and endorses the visual forms of its creation process, in books or elsewhere. Similarly, artists have accompanied their works with texts for a long time –Jean-Marc Poinot identified them as “authorised narratives” –, or have even made the texts part of the works themselves. The ambiguity obviously lies in the quantity of texts produced and their status. Contemporary artists precisely use this irresoluteness to perform textual productions in many variations, as exemplified by the musical and sound productions by Art & Language and Dominique Petitgand; John Giorno and Ed Ruscha's visual poems, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster's fictional matrixes, the narrated performances by Tris Vonna-Michell and duo Louise Hervé and Chloé Maillet, as well as the many films and videos that imply narration. Other artists publish their texts, and their novels can even become the subject of exhibitions.⁸ Recently, these publications have followed the path of experimental literature and alternative editions, which eschew a unique format in order to adapt to the needs of the “performance” of the textual contents on walls, screens or stages.
- 6 However, to imagine systematic valences between literature and art would be simplistic, since critical entry points as well as genres and forms are far from homogeneous, as Béatrice Cussol's literary and graphic work demonstrates. Her latest text, *Ecrire ou partir*, published by the Printemps de septembre, came out at the same time as a monograph catalogue, *Eponyme*, which focuses on her paintings.⁹ An artist and a writer, she divides her work into distinct spaces which do, however, echo each other. In *Ecrire ou partir*, a narrative and experimental work, her prose is perceptibly influenced by Monique Wittig and the text is built on associations, shifts, overflowing and closures. In the same way, the vulva matrixes she represents in her drawings are

deformed and reformed in order to compose impossible, strange and dream-like characters, dominated by a perceptible yet formless female presence, as in her writings. Through the “un-objective space” defined by Annie Le Brun, the connections between these productions, which are so similar in their creation processes, yet visually so distinct, can be achieved and made sense of, although they are neither absolute nor obvious. To enter the folds of this aesthetics that is clarified by degrees, it is helpful to make a detour through the works of other artists, such as Ida Applebroog and Georgia O’Keeffe, and writers – Violette Leduc and Kathy Acker –, in order to develop, through constellations and networks of concordances, a synthetical reception of dissociated experiences. David Shrigley’s book, in the same series, delivers an account of a musical experiment which, like a performance archive, is remediated in the book. The work reproduces the lyrics from thirty-one songs he made a gift of to musicians, who would then perform them with instruments that had been especially designed for a 2016 Printemps de septembre project in Toulouse. *Problem in Toulouse* is a rendering of this performance as well as a poetry book, with texts to be sung for oneself or to be freely reconstituted. These experiments, like a gift for future creativity, demonstrate the flowering of literature within visual arts and *vice versa*, like a crossed graft bearing hybrid fruit.

NOTES

1. Vouilloux, Bernard. *Le Tournant « artiste » de la littérature française : écrire avec la peinture au XIXe siècle*, Paris: Hermann, 2011, (Savoir Lettres)
2. Gleize, Jean-Marie. *Littéralité*, Paris: Questions théoriques, 2015, (Forbidden Beach)
3. See: Théval, Gaëlle. *Poésie ready-made XXe-XXIe siècles*, Paris: L’Harmattan, 2015, (Arts et médias)
4. Mitchell, W.J.T. *Picture Theory: Essays on verbal and visual representation*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994
5. Foster, Hal. “An Archival Impulse”, *October*, no. 110, Autumn 2004, p. 3-22
6. For example: Rocha, João. *Kim Jong Il Looking at Things*, Paris: Jean Boîte, 2012
7. Place, Vanessa. *Tragodia 1: Statement of Facts*, Los Angeles: Insert Blanc Press, 2011
8. *The Book Lovers*, a curatorial project launched by David Maroto and Joanna Zielińska, is a collection of artist narratives that is regularly exhibited, for example at the Frac Franche-Comté during *Montag ou la bibliothèque à venir* (15 October 2017-14 January 2018).
9. *Béatrice Cussol : eponym e*, Nantes: Amac, 2019

AUTHORS

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Magali Nachtergaele is a lecturer in Literature and Contemporary art at the Sorbonne Paris Nord University since 2010. She has published *Les Mythologies individuelles, récit de soi et photographie au 20e siècle* (Rodopi; Brill, 2012), *Roland Barthes contemporain* (Max Milo; Frac Aquitaine, 2015) and *Danse contemporaine et littérature* (Centre national de la danse, 2015) edited with Lucille Toth. Her upcoming book, *Poet Against the Machine* focuses on creative human-technology interactions and will be published in October 2020 by Le Mot et le reste. She is also a curator (Frac Aquitaine, Seoul Museum of Art, Rencontres d'Arles) and an art critic.