

New Ghost Stories: Images as memorial survival

« Nouvelles histoires de fantômes » : de l'image comme survivance mémorielle

'Nieuwe spookverhalen': hoe de herinnering overleeft in het beeld

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Translator: Sarah Voke



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- 1 “Same as the [tearful] lover [who watches the vessel carry her lover away], all we have left, to say the truth, is the shadow of the object of our wishes; but its loss increases our desire, and we contemplate the copies more attentively than we would have the originals, had they been in our possession. We are often, in this regard, in the situation of those who, convinced of the existence of ghosts, imagine they see something when in fact there is nothing.”¹
- 2 For the past thirty years, Didi-Huberman has not ceased to question these images, close to ghosts, with the goal of sounding out what persists in the iconographical trace of a lamentation gest, from what Aby Warburg called the “pathetic formulas”. The idea of survival, this “afterlife” as designated by the Warburgian term *Nachleben*, proposes a new memory regime based on another temporality.

Exhibition at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris: “Nouvelles histoires de fantômes”.



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- 3 The exhibition at the Palais de Tokyo titled “Nouvelles histoires de fantômes” positions itself at the intersection of history, art and philosophy and originates in Aby Warburg’s Plate 42 of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, in its final version dating from 1929. Same as a work in progress, the installation has evolved through time from its first version presented at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia (Madrid) in 2010. In 2011, as requested by Didi-Huberman, Arno Gisinger took a look at “Atlas” with his photographer’s eye during his visit to Hamburg in 2011, and later offered his “photographic interpretation”. In 2012, the exhibition at the Fresnoy evolved into “Ghost stories for the full grown-up” thus uniting the collaboration between both artists and revealing its “definitive” version at the Palais de Tokyo after having transited at the Museo de Arte do Rio in 2013.
- 4 The idea of the installation particular to the atlas, within a frame where it is used as a method, creates a *mise en abyme*. Indeed, the installation becomes thereby a process. It is not only “an exhibition in the time of its technical reproducibility”, but also a creation presented in four dimensions. Gisinger’s photographs, affixed to the wall, are associated to the film projections, on the ground, chosen by Didi-Huberman. This is furthermore supplemented by a soundtrack, which the peal of a bell vibrates the visitors as they pass by. “The atlas”, as the spectral memory of lamentations in the version of the “New ghost stories”, nearly turns into a kinaesthetic experience. Within the space of the *Grande Verrière* at the Palais de Tokyo, with its near one thousand square meters, it is no longer about imagining “seeing something when in fact there is nothing” but rather about *perceiving* the survival of images as a perceptive conscience, in the sense meant by Merleau-Ponty. Ghosts *are* among us...

- 5 The flow of images, both the ones affixed to the wall and the ones scrolling on the ground, pulsate a rhythm rather than an energy as an “act of rhythm that has become expressive” (Deleuze & Guattari 1980, 388) It is vain to say that various iconographical resonances dialogue amongst themselves: it is a disparate community which “talks” together, from Eisenstein to Angelopoulos, from Godard to Richter. More than ever before, the relation between image and speech is perceptible. “*To touch time*, this is indeed what an image can achieve, as long as it is ‘dialectical’, as long as it organizes accurately its *monads* (its ‘memory spots’) and its *creations* (its memory constellations).” (Didi-Huberman 2014, 36-37)
- 6 In order to carry on the perceptive experience of survival which Didi-Huberman invites us to, though however shifting toward the field of fiction, we recommend experiencing *Under the skin* by Jonathan Glazer in cinemas. Not only is survival perceptible in the editing process and carried by the rhythm of the film, there is also an intrigue surrounding this theme. A new ghost story...
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“New ghost stories”

Georges Didi-Hubermann and Arno Gisinger

In collaboration with Le Fresnoy, Studio National des Arts contemporains

From 14 February to 7 September 2014.

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NOTES

1. Reference to J. J. Winkelman’s *History of the Art of Antiquity*, in Didi-Huberman (2002, 17).
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ABSTRACTS

Exhibition. Georges Didi-Huberman and Arno Gisinger have joined forces to bring traces and imaginary constellations to life, and to make them resonate. Although as a temporary and temporal event, their exhibition lies now in the past, we should remember it precisely to understand its afterlife - its phantoms, ghosts, and spirits.

Exposition. G. Didi-Huberman et A. Gisinger se sont associés pour mettre en œuvre et faire parler la trace et le montage. Même si l'exposition, en tant qu'événement, est passée, elle peut être à juste titre gardée en mémoire pour mieux comprendre ce qui – fantômes, spectres, esprit ? – va la suivre.

Tentoonstelling. Georges Didi-Huberman en Arno Gisinger hebben de krachten gebundeld om een podium en een stem te geven aan sporen en montage. De tentoonstelling ligt al even achter ons, maar het is belangrijk om er een herinnering van te behouden, zodat we begrijpen wat ervan overblijft – welke spoken, geesten en schimmen.

INDEX

Keywords: Didi-Hubermann Georges, phantom, image, exhibition, Gisinger Arno

Trefwoorden Didi-Hubermann Georges, spook, beeld, tentoonstelling, Gisinger Arno

Mots-clés: Didi-Hubermann Georges, fantôme, image, exposition, Gisinger Arno