

Articulations on Creativity

-Aubrey Reeves, TSV Programming Director

Montreal-based artist Manon De Pauw's performance-based work uses the body as an object that concretely manifests creative thoughts. Both her installations and single-channel videos reflect on the act of communication and the struggle artists face to articulate creativity. Whether using the images of a lone artist in her studio, or a collaborative group brainstorming ideas, De Pauw exhibits an intense understanding of how creative ideas are developed and expressed.

In De Pauw's work *Replis et articulations* she uses her own body like a puppet on a stage. In this video triptych, the camera is situated above the action, aimed down upon a black platform that is both "canvas and playground" for the artist. Three side-by-side videos present different actions by the doll-like figure of De Pauw. In the central square she draws a white chalk circle around herself, transforming into a modern version of Leonardo Di Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* (1492) then smudges the line with her legs while marking time as a human-sized clock. De Pauw states that in this work the "body is alternately manipulating and manipulated, object and instrument, inert and active, motor and motif".

Replis et articulations takes place in a neutral space, in which De Pauw is acting on and seemingly trapped within. It is a solitary arena, for the artist to exercise and experiment with the creative process. Here in the studio, she is removed from the regular world and at times even normal laws of physics. For instance, she manages at one point to defy gravity, floating and gliding across squares, perhaps suggesting the lightness and exhilaration that an artist feels when she catches a spark of inspiration.

In her video installation *L'atelier d'écriture (beside writing)*, De Pauw has used a similar set-up to again create a neutral workshop space; however, this time De Pauw is not the central figure in the creative exercises. Whereas in *Replis et articulations* De Pauw was investigating solitary gestures of expression, in *L'atelier d'écriture*, the creative acts are communal and social. Created at the Banff Centre for the Arts, De Pauw enlisted other resident artists to be her performers, whom she placed in groups of eight around a table fitted with microphones and an over-head camera. The result is a view of the table-top surface, surrounded by eight anonymous heads and 16 arms.

The action begins with each pair of arms holding a piece of paper. In near unison they perform a series of movements with the paper that evoke the processes and frustrations of writing, yet it also becomes balletic choreography with the arms moving in elegant formations. They scribble on the paper, fold it, tear it, crumble it and start over. The sounds of moving paper, pens and hands are amplified to reverberate within the space, exaggerating the significance of each gesture. The video continues with the act of writing evolving into drawing, collage, rhythm and pattern.

At times, the perfect harmony of movement is abandoned for individual movements that are all contributing to a collective goal. For example, at one point the performers are covering the table with hundred of yellow sticky-notes, but each participant is following their own pattern. The yellow blocks create a haphazard design that slowly converts the long rectangular table into a yellow grid.

During one of the sessions – this time at a round table – the participants pull out file-folders containing papers, each printed with a single black letter of the alphabet. Letters are thrown out into the middle of the board table one on top of the other, as though a intense brainstorming session is taking place, yet the "product" remains abstract. The act of writing is a common motif in De Pauw's work; however, she often avoids sentences and words with specific meanings, using instead letters, scribbles and doodles as stand-ins to evoke and draw attention to the process of writing, rather than the product.

Throughout *L'atelier d'écriture* the central fixture is the table, where all the activities takes place. Tables have always been the symbol of negotiation, sharing and social cohesion. De Pauw uses the tabletop metaphorically as "a field to invest or to share, a sensitive zone of interactions." When filming, De Pauw gave only limited choreographic instructions to the performers. As a result, the gestures are largely improvised in each scene. Sitting at the table, each participant must carefully watch and silently communicate through signals to their fellow participants. Alternatively, if a participant is unhappy with the direction of the exercise she or he must mutely wrestle for control of the group. Visitors to the gallery may return throughout the run of the exhibition to find the activities at the writing table have substantially changed, becoming aggressive or quite playful, demonstrating a constant push and pull between collective and individual creative expressions.

Artist bio

Manon De Pauw works in the field of video art, installation, performance, and photography. She has presented solo exhibitions at Optica (Montreal, 2007), La Bande Vidéo (Québec city, 2007), Expression (St-Hyacinthe, 2005), Sylviane Poirier Art Contemporain (Montreal, 2004) and DARE-DARE (Montreal, 2003), amongst others. Her work has been shown in numerous exhibitions and festivals in Canada, Europe, and Latin America. It can be found in the collections of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, and the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec. She lives and works in Montreal, and teaches in the Photography Department at Concordia University. www.manondepauw.com

L'atelier d'écriture (beside writing) was filmed at the Banff Centre. The artist would like to thank the participants: Nancy Atakan, Marilyn Booth, Marna Bunnell, JR Carpenter, Paulo da Costa, Joey Dubuc, Simon Glass, Janice Gurney, Catherine Hamel, Rachelle Viader Knowles, Ernie Kroeger, Nate Larson, Laurel MacMillan, Michael Maranda, Billy Mavreas, Joni Murphy, Emilie O'Brien, Baco Ohama, Sylvia Ptak, Jen Rae, John Richey, Adriana Riquer, Nina Serebrianiuk, Ken Singer, and Jessica Wyman. This project received financial support from the Canada Council for the Arts.

TSV Gallery Call for Submissions
Deadline November 15, 2007

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Trinity Square Video presents

Manon De Pauw

L'atelier d'écriture
(beside writing)



Exhibition: October 26 - December 1, 2007

Opening: October 26, 2007, 6 - 9 pm

Artist Talk: October 27, 2007, 2 - 4 pm

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