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Roussel : hier, aujourd'hui

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Locus solus: Towards the attributes of a New Artistic «Genre»

Sozita Goudouna
p. 385-408

TEXTE NOTES AUTEUR ILLUSTRATIONS

TEXTE INTÉGRAL

- **1** Foucault Michel, *Death and the Labyrinth*, London, Continuum, 2004, p. 166.

Roussel's sun, which is always there and always «lacking», which runs the risk of dissipating itself outside, but which also shines on the horizon—that is the constitutional flaw of language, its poverty, the irreducible distance from which the light shines indefinitely.

By this essential distance where language is called upon to fatally repeat itself, and things to be absurdly confused, death makes audibly clear the strange promise that language will no longer repeat itself, but will be able to repeat infinitely that which is no more^{**1**}.

¹In 1932, without any previous chess experience, Roussel met, played and took lessons from Max Romih and Xavier Tartakower—two of the most eminent chess players of the time—at the Café de la Régence in Paris. Within a few months he had published in Tartakower's chess journal *L'Échiquier* a solution to the notorious bishop and knight endgame, in which a lone king remains versus a king, knight and bishop.

- **2** See Howells David, «Formule Roussel», *Conference proceedings, Raymond Roussel: Interdisciplinary P (...)*

2Although it is said to occur very rarely in a real play, this endgame is one of the most difficult to win in that a mate is technically possible, but not easily achieved within the fifty moves allowed or without blundering into stalemate in the process².

— 1892 —

SECTION FINS DE PARTIE

LE MAT DU FOU ET CAVALIER

FORMULE RAYMOND-ROUSSEL

Méthode nouvelle pour faciliter le mat du Fou et Cavalier expliquée par S. Tartakower.

♔ + ♖ + ♘ contre ♚

Introduction

Malgré les méthodes proposées ces derniers temps (par MM. Przypiórka, Delétang, etc.), on entend sans cesse les amateurs d'échecs se plaindre de ce que leur mémoire ne possède rien de précis et que le fil des événements leur échappe plus facilement qu'en ne le pense.

Les anciens manuels n'examinaient, en effet, que la position où le ♚ se trouve déjà acculé à la bordure et ils cherchent par des manœuvres compliquées, à le pourchasser du « mauvais angle » jusqu'au « bon angle ».

Un pas en avant dans l'orientation, si nécessaire pour l'amateur, fut réalisé par M. Delétang avec son système des triangles (voir notamment *Le Traité Complet d'Échecs* de Chéron), qui permet de mieux manier le ♖, mais on n'a pas encore de points de repère assez expressifs pour le maniement du ♘.

Dorénavant le travail des trois pièces blanches se trouve profondément coordonné. Les pédagogues pourront répondre aux plaintes de leurs élèves, grâce à la nouvelle formule Raymond-Roussel¹.

Cette formule magique s'imprègne d'elle-même dans notre esprit et nous mène presque automatiquement au mat!

Positions Finales

Avant d'énoncer cette formule, constatons que le mat du ♖ et ♘ ne se laisse forcer que dans un des angles de

la couleur du ♖ — à savoir, soit sur, soit près de la case angulaire, comme le montrent, par exemple, les deux diagrammes N° 1a et 1b.

1a

1b

Le signe de cédille

Si nous examinons ces deux positions finales, nous verrons que le ♘ s'y trouve en sorte de cédille, opposé au ♖. C'est sous ce signe de cédille que se poursuivra le travail du mat de ♖ et ♘.

Les étapes

Avant de parvenir triomphalement à b7, les deux étapes importantes dans le maniement du ♖ sont celles des diagrammes N° 2a et 2b.

2a


2b

Placé à b3 (diagramme N° 2a), le ♖ tient le ♚ dans une prison large, mais définitive, si le ♘ coopère à l'action

L'échiquier, «Le Mat du fou et du cavalier», November 1932.

3 However, what could be the consequences of such an achievement for contemporary artistic production? What if the king is the spectator that remains alone versus the performers and the stage or versus the exhibited art object on the wall? What if the black and white squares on the chess board represent the textual (literary) context versus the performative or the visual versus the theatrical, how such an opposition could be resolved?



 Alastair Mackie, *Amorphous Organic*
Benaki Museum, Athens, 2010.
Photo credits Maria Boucaouri.

4 Scholars have been debating the interrelations of the arts for centuries and the contemporary focus has shifted to the intermedial relations between the various arts and media. This intersection between different media principally concerns the relation between the arts of time (theatre, literature, music, film) and the arts of space (the visual arts). The progressive intermedial networking of the arts with one another, and as a consequence the tendency toward the

elimination of the boundary between art and «non-art», follows in the wake of the aestheticization of everyday life.

- **3** A distinction is made between media understood as a means of transmitting signals bearing a written (...) [\(...\)](#)
- **4** See Barton Bruce, «Paradox as Process: Intermedial Anxiety and the Betrayals of Intimacy», *Theatre* [\(...\)](#)

5 The term *intermediality* is directly related to the concept of the medium (and its essential components), from a perspective that takes into consideration the far-reaching transformations of aesthetic experience (and of the arts) that have been effected through recent and contemporary developments. Both of the constituent parts of the term *intermediality*, *inter-* and *media*, designate «betweenness». The many interrelated aspects of the multifaceted concept of the medium generally include several types or levels of mediality that have to be correlated with each other. This condition can also be described as «inter-medial», the «multimodal» or even «post-medial**3**». Intermedia appears in the form of conceptual art, performance art, video art, new dance, graphically-notated music and music involving theatrical activity, a «new» theatre based on extra-theatrical sources, visual poetry, phonetic poetry**4**.

- **5** Gelikman Oleg, «Intermediality and Aesthetic Theory in Shklovsky's and Adorno's Thought», *Comparat* [\(...\)](#)

6 Oleg Gelikman places the concept of intermediality in the context of the unresolved conflict between philosophical aesthetics and aesthetic theory. The conflict originated in the response of an influential generation of thinkers to the crisis of the neo-Kantian schools and the emergence of modernism in the 1910s. As Gelikman supports, despite the relatively new usage of the term it presses into

service an old, indeed archaic argument for the centrality of the medium to representation. It can be found, as he stated, in Aristotle's *Poetics*, Lessing's *Laocoön*, and the newer *Laocoön* that proliferated in the twentieth century (beginning with Irving Babbitt's *The New Laocoön: An Essay on the Confusion of the Arts* [1910]). Gelikman sketches a transition other than the one from the mono-medial to inter-medial production, namely, from «aesthetics» to «aesthetic theory». However, when he proposes to relate «intermediality» to the transition from aesthetics to aesthetic theory, he does not mean to suggest that we are free to go back to the historical context in which the distinction between the two appeared⁵.

⁷Recent developments in the visual arts and the theatre have resulted in increasing overlap, mutual infiltration and obliteration of boundaries. Diverse artistic phenomena are referred to as «theatre» and many disciplines of art, such as performance and installation art, are making use of theatrical conventions. Artistic practice involves considerable «theatricalization» and theatrical productions use new media and other artistic activity. Hence, questions are raised concerning the subjugation of one art form by another.

⁸Parallel to this, potentialities of knowledge that emerge from the intersections of art and science orientate our notions concerning the artistic work in new directions. Contemporary art practices are characterized by the transformation of completed or finalized art objects into open works and spatially expanded situations. These art processes raise various issues concerning methodology from philosophical, aesthetic and scientific perspectives.

⁹This paper addresses certain of these issues, by focusing on the question of the relation between the medium of the work (of art) and

what is outside of it (surroundings, author, painter, reader, beholder), through an examination of the uniqueness of Raymond Roussel's text *Locus solus* in conjunction with the intermedia production of *Locus Solus* by the non-profit company *Out Of The Box Intermedia*.

¹⁰The transformation and displacement of the visual, textual and the theatrical in the work *Locus solus* by Raymond Roussel is used as the dramaturgical method of production towards the creation of a «new» artistic genre. The creation of this new genre by *Out Of The Box Intermedia* does not attempt to resolve all questions concerning the relation of theatre with the visual arts, but rather attempts to rethink these relations and recast the conceptual and aesthetic «fields» with which art and theatre are inextricably linked. As Foucault argued the instruments, stage settings, performances and skills exercise two great mythical functions for Roussel: those of joining and discovery. According to Foucault,

- **6** Foucault Michel, *Death and the Labyrinth: The World of Raymond Roussel*, London, Continuum, 2007, p [\(...\)](#)

To join beings across the greatest distances of the cosmos (the earthworm and the musician, the rooster and the writer, the heart of the loaf of bread and marble, tarot cards and phosphorus); to join incompatible elements (the water line and the thread of material, chance and the rules, infirmity and virtuosity, puffs of smoke and the mass of a sculpture); to join beyond any conceivable dimension ranges of sizes without relation (scenes carved in grape seeds, musical mechanisms hidden in the thickness of tarot cards). But also to rediscover a vanished past⁶.

¹¹Foucault suggests, that most of the time to join and to rediscover are the two mythic aspects of one and the same figure. Cantrell's

corpses treated with *ressurrectine* join life and death by recreating the past exactly. As he noted:

- **7** Foucault Michel, loc. cit.

Inside the great brilliant crystal where Roussel's dream float, there are the figures which join (the tresses-harp, the cat-fish, the harnessed sea horses) and those which are discoveries (Danton's still-talkative head, the figures of divers going up and down preserving fragments of history or legend, the harness which recreates the chariot of the rising sun)**7**.

- **8** *Out of the Box Intermedia* a non-profit interdisciplinary arts organization actively committed to t (...)

¹²The production of *Locus Solus* by *Out Of The Box Intermedia***8** attempts to understand the juncture between joining and discovery as well as the tension of «what is representing» and «what is represented» by enabling the spectators to see themselves as part of the created situation. The establishment of a singular set of spatial relations between the art objects, the performers and the architectural space is achieved by the inclusion of the beholder in the art work.

- **9** According to Wagner the «Gesamtkunstwerk».

¹³The three different stages/spaces of the performance based installation project *Locus Solus I, II, III* (2008–2010) reconsidered the work of the proto-surrealist writer and Surrealism's historical context, along with its literary and pictorial culture, so as to engage with the ways in which a «classic» text like *Locus solus* can comment on the notion of the «total work of art⁹» and on the implications of new technologies and practices that challenge received notions about the theatrical event and about the art object and its representation. The scenographic approach in *Locus Solus* examines points of

intersection between theatre and installation art, in a structure that is interpreted as a version of «scenodynamic architecture», namely, an «architectural» construction, that attempts to embody the ways in which the «total artwork» is expressed through a synthetic relationship between sound, colour, form and movement. A «responsive environment» based on a more external plastic and dimensional paradigm, as a kind of flexible performance environment that accommodates the project's vision. Contemporary technologically responsive environments have been entangled with performance across a wide range of disciplines, hence, the production's scenographic and architectural practices concentrate on the experiential, three-dimensionality of performance space rather than the representational aspects of its visual image.

¹⁴Parallel to this, the project addresses a general strategy in collaborative practice that engages participants in the work, by shifting the meaning of the art object to the experience that is made with and through this work. The focus on individual artistic practice, the experience of the artistic process and the attitude of the creative act are some of the guiding principles that inform the expanded and unbounded relationship between space, subjecthood and artwork.

¹⁵The project engaged with the use of new media, sound and performance, including work that is process-driven, participatory and interactive. The artworks and performances involve a variety of time-based media, hybrid, intermedia forms and expanded modes of display beyond the museum or the theatre. Roussel's early fascination with human machine entanglements, fantastic hybrids of nature and technology, bodies and machines; machines which produce living beings and living things; organic matter integrated in machines and

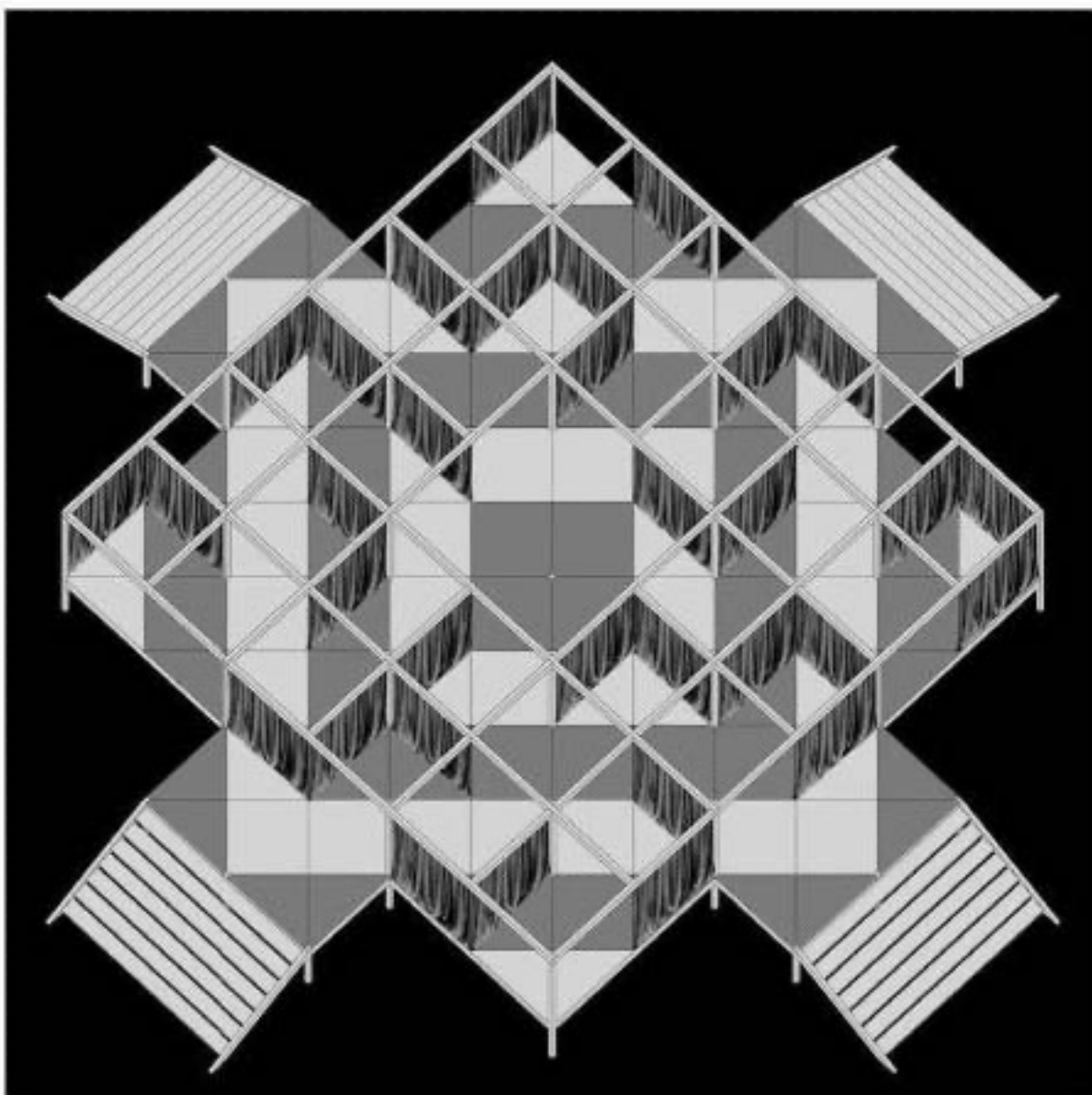
the construction of hyperreal landscapes, is identified with practices that involve intermedia and hybrid forms of art production.

16 Intermediality is examined as a radical force that operates in-between realities and that involves new modes of representation and collaboration, new dramaturgical strategies, new ways of creating temporal and spatial interrelations, both in artistic venues and public spaces. Intermedia art practice involves a combinatory structure of syntactical elements that come from more than one medium but are combined into one and are thereby transformed into a new entity. The reference frame of the entire system of art forms that mediates the intermedial correlation is itself included in the processes of transformation. This approach highlights the dialectic between the media that is not reliant only on technology, as it is often believed, however, technology often provides with more possibilities for exploring the potentials and limits of every art medium.

17 *Locus Solus* attempts to integrate different mediums into an intermedial correlation that encounters the entangled relationship between live performance and installation art and between performers and art works. The stage is designed as a machine that utilizes the technologies of time and space and media in creating an affective responsive experience for the audience. *Locus Solus* is staged as a labyrinthine installation, an entity with many discrete parts, of stages within stages, and of events within events, that generates critical «points of view», concerning scenographic, visual and theatrical practice. The project deploys a scenographic and a dramaturgical model based on an analogy between the central character's laboratories and a museum (a cabinet of curiosities). The laboratories with the ingenious inventions represent gallery rooms, where visual artists exhibit their work.



■■■■■
Locus Solus,
Out Of The Box Intermedia
Costas Alivizatos,
A-mazing Villa
Benaki Museum,
September–October 2010.



■■■■ ■■■■
Locus Solus,
Out Of The Box Intermedia
Costas Alivizatos,
A-mazing Villa
Benaki Museum,
September–October 2010.

18The project investigates the ways in which visual artists are attracted to the expressive possibilities of the theatre and of

theatricality as a property of the quotidian, yet repelled by its seemingly mimetic drive, while it works with recent trends in performance and installation art which pose interesting challenges to the legacy of theatricality by altering common perceptions about representation, performance space, scenery, costume, lighting, sound and video.

19In Roussel's *Locus solus*, the prominent scientist and inventor, Martial Canterel, invites a group of colleagues to visit the park of his secluded country estate, «Locus Solus». As the group tours the estate, Canterel shows them inventions of ever-increasing complexity and strangeness. Roussel presents a new world of machine technology, which he links integrally to a fresh exploration of language. He specializes in detailed descriptions of peculiar artifacts linked to the concept of the machine and to the advent of new technology, while he intention-ally orchestrates an episodic structure of a single afternoon's exposition. The objects on the guided tour in the garden are enshrined and cared for with an unabashed fetishism, the scenic space is occupied with pseudoscientific mechanisms, marvels and inanimate bodies. A mysterious underground passageway leads into «Locus solus».

20The marvels include: four dancers who embody eight figures within eight *tableaux vivants* inside an enormous glass cage, a road-mender's tool which when activated by the weather creates a mosaic of a hoard of teeth in a range of color, a huge glass diamond filled with water in which float a dancing girl, Danton's preserved head, a small dirigible called the «demoiselle» with several delicate instruments attached, African mud sculptures, a hairless cat and a vast aquarium in which human beings can breathe. The inventor Canterel provides a thorough history of each exhibit, while he

invents *resurrectine*, a fluid that revitalizes inanimate bodies. The subject, as Roussel suggested:

[...] reproduisait aussitôt, avec une stricte exactitude, les moindres mouvements accomplis par lui durant telles minutes marquantes de son existence; puis, sans temps de repos, il répétait indéfiniment la même invariable série de faits et gestes choisie une fois pour toutes. Et l'illusion de la vie était absolue: mobilité du regard, jeu continu des poumons, parole, agissements divers, marche, rien n'y manquait (*LS*, p. 144).

- **10** This technique inspired the group OuLiPo, also known as the «workshop of potential literature». Ou (...)
- **11** The early stories «begin and end with phrases that are identical except for a single letter, but w (...)

21In order to generate the structure of his plots, surreal prose style and texts, Roussel had adopted an overall principle or formula derived from several different complex linguistic devices to produce the foundations of a new writing rationale. The format of the narrative is shaped by Roussel's method of composition—the «procédé**10**». The «procédé» is an elaborate word game that exploited the homonymic nature of French words**11** and that determined the content of Roussel's texts. Through complicated intricate word games and phonetic distortions he would exploit the homonymic nature and complex relation of words; and by selecting a random phrase, and distorting it, he would create incredible imagery. For example, he changed the phrase «demoiselle à prétendant» into *demoiselle*(pavement–laying device) *à reître en dents* (soldier of fortune in teeth) (*C*, p. 23). From this, he derived, for *Locus solus*, a balloon–powered paving apparatus that makes a mosaic (depicting a scene from the tale of Aag, a German soldier) out of extracted teeth (*LS*, p. 49–55).

²²Roussel's special method is outlined in *Comment j'ai écrit certains de mes livres* (*How I Wrote Certain of my Books*, published posthumously in 1935) and his basic paradigm is an image or idea generating supplemental material, which, though seemingly infinite in scope, will always resolve itself with the original subject. The notion of a containment of an entity within another identical entity, that is to say, the «mise en abyme» is also related to the method of the «procédé» and can be used as a scenographic material. In the visual arts, an image placed into itself repetitively (the image of an image) creates the effect of «mise en abyme», which literally means «to put something into infinity». The same is applicable to narrative, when a story is told within a story.

- **12** London, April 2009, <http://vimeo.com/5459210>
- **13** Raff Colin, *Raymond Roussel (1877-1933), an Idiot Savant Without Idiocy*, New York, New York Press, (...)
- **14**<http://vimeo.com/5459260>

²³The three different stages of this modular project attempted to map out the experimental textual method of the «procédé» and of the «mise en abyme», in terms of its spatial and temporal ramifications, by introducing a chain of shifting players, places, and temporalities. The first stage of the project, *Locus Solus I*, was presented at the art venue Shunt Vaults in London Bridge¹², as well as at public spaces in Elephant & Castle (London¹³) and Manhattan (New York¹⁴).

remained *in situ*, and were only transformed during the interaction with the performers at the actual performance.

25 The two public interventions (Elephant & Castle and Manhattan) investigated points of intersection (connections, linkages, overlaps) between Roussel's *Locus solus* and the public realm of the city, by exploring the imbricated realms of the «private/solitary» and the public sphere. These spatial shifts were used as a critical scenographic practice that addressed what might be called the site-specificity of everyday life and a variety of other action typologies.



- **15** *Locus Solus Public: Conversations Curatives*, is a project that consisted of various methods for co (...)

*Locus Solus-Conversations Curatives*¹⁵

Public Space Elephant & Castle, London,
May 2009.

- **16** The Byzantine and Christian Museum was founded in 1914. From 1930 on it has been housed in the «Il (...)»
- **17** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CKCvEraFdwY>

²⁶During the second stage of the project, *Locus Solus II*, Martial Canterel's estate and his luxurious laboratories were simulated with the former mansion of the Duchess of Placentia that is now transformed into the Byzantine Museum in Athens¹⁶. Site-specific installations encircled the estate at different and hidden locations¹⁷. The artworks engaged in a dialogue between art and the emerging forms of technology (augmented reality, hybrid interfaces, interactive art).



- **18** Martial Canterel's Estate and his luxurious laboratories in the former Mansion of the Duchess of P (...)

Locus Solus, Augmented Reality **18**

Dimitra Stamatiou,

Byzantine Museum, Athens, 2010.



Locus Solus,

Artemis Papageorgiou Fabrique

Byzantine Museum, Athens 2010.

- **19** The final stage of the project, *Locus Solus III*, consisted of a series of art works, art practices (...)
- **20** The Benaki Museum ranks among the major institutions that have enriched the material assets of the (...)
- **21** <http://vimeo.com/16502937>
- **22** Andrea Palladio (1508–1580), one of the greatest Italian architects crafted a new architectural la (...)

27The directorial approach and architectural design of the final stage¹⁹ of the project, *Locus Solus III*, at the Benaki Museum²⁰ was inspired by Michel Foucault's analysis of Roussel's work²¹. The architectural installation is a labyrinth, inspired by the Palladian villa²², based on symmetry and perspective. The walls of the thirty-six rooms (laboratories) in the labyrinth are replaced by proscenium-arch curtains, that shape thirty-six stages. The curtain frames the viewer's presence in the installation. The art pieces and exhibits confront each other over the notion of theatricality—the construction of scenic space, the stage and the duration of the experience. The «Cabinet of Curiosities» becomes a theatrical exhibition where the audience is both a spectator and a performer walking inside the cabinets/stages. The role of the spectator is transformed into a structural element of the work.



Augmented Reality
Locus Solus–Augmented Reality
Dimitra Stamatiou,
Benaki Museum, Athens, 2010.



■■■■■
Alexandra Waierstall, *Hourglass Entity*
Lina Dima-*Platonic Solids Unfolded*
Benaki Museum, Athens, 2010.



■■■■■
Alexandra Waierstall, *Hourglass Entity*


Balint Bolygo, *Danton's Head*

Benaki Museum, Athens, 2010.



James P. Graham,
The Golden Brain
Eleni Spiridaki, *Pyramid*
Benaki Museum, Athens, 2010.
Photo credits Maria Boucaouri.




Locus Solus,
Mario Simitis, *Dear Deer*
Benaki Museum, Athens, 2010.
Photo credits Maria Boucaouri.

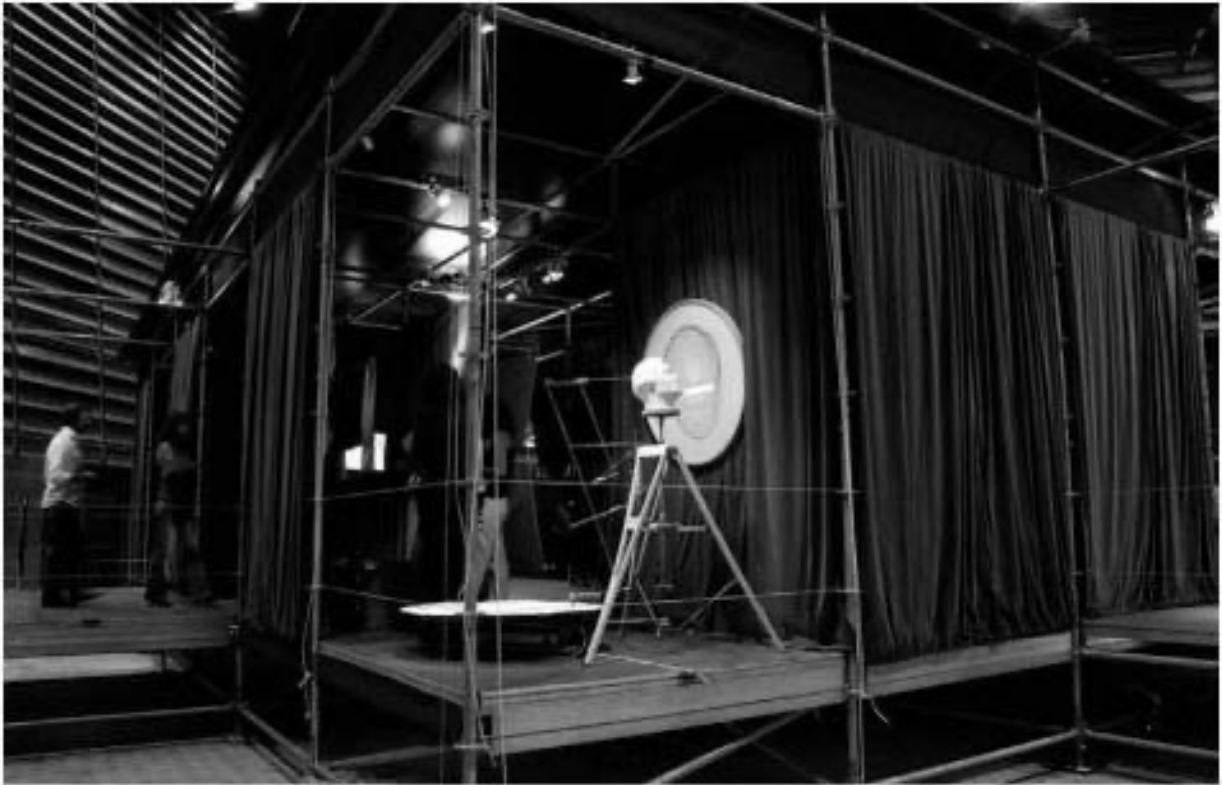


Alastair Mackie, *Amorphous Organic*
Benaki Museum, Athens, 2010.
Photo credits Maria Boucaouri.

- **23** See Deleuze Gilles, «The Brain is the Screen: an Interview with Gilles Deleuze», *The Brain in the (...)*

28 Roussel's «language machines» and his animistic relationship to language request a peculiar deciphering. Similar decrypting processes are to be used in understanding the synthesis of art forms and the coexistence of mediums during the three stages of the modular *Locus Solus Project*, as well as the points of architectural intersection between the theatrical space and the museum. Nevertheless, the certitude remains that the encounter between two mediums does not take place when one begins to reflect on the other, but when one discipline realizes that it has to resolve, for itself and

by its own means, a problem similar to one confronted by the other²³ and that all work is inserted in a system of relays where the different art mediums coexist in an integrative and interactive process.



- ²⁴ Balint Bolygo's *Trace* is a sculptural device that alludes to scientific discoveries and pseudoscience (...)

Locus Solus-Out of the Box Intermedia

Balint Bolygo, *Trace: Danton's Head*²⁴

Benaki Museum, Athens, September–October 2010.



- **25** The sculpture *A Matter of Life and Death* is an installation that comprises a pair of transparent a (...)

Locus Solus-Out of the Box Intermedia

Simon Tegala, *A Matter of Life and Death*²⁵

Benaki Museum, Athens, September–October 2010.

Locus Solus I: Selected Practices

- **26** For example «stealing data», organized meetings and interviews, informal talks, chance encounters, (...)
- **27** The wiki works as a textual performance space.
- **28**<http://conversationscuratives.pbworks.com/>http://www.flickr.com/photos/panos_kouros/sets/721 (...)

29The two public interventions (Elephant & Castle and Manhattan) investigated points of intersection (connections, linkages, overlaps) between Roussel's *Locus solus* and the public sphere. In this context the artist Panos Kouros with a group of students of architecture presented *Locus Solus Public: Conversations Curatives*, a project that consisted of various methods²⁶ for collecting written and oral texts. The *Aylesbury Collecting Action* was one of the methods used for collecting data. The successive pages of Roussel's books *Locus solus* and *How I Wrote Certain of My Books* were placed in successive garage doors around the interior courtyard of Aylesbury (block Gayhurst 1–61), in such a way that the books could be read by walking the perimeter of the courtyard, clockwise. This action was a performance of field and networks in the city. Informal talks with residents were produced during and after the action. The conversations were collected as part of the walking session works, to be used as base material for personal uttering recensions, during the project. A Wiki²⁷ recension was also produced as one of the methods of collecting data²⁸.

30According to the artist and coordinator, Panos Kouros, *Conversations Curatives* (talking cure) is an active role for Canterel. *Conversations Curatives* is a found *Locus Solus* phrase used as a critical notion to destabilize Locus, Solus, and representation. *Locus Solus Public* produces a shifting space of proximity between invited actors, social spaces in Elephant & Castle, and Roussel's novel *Locus solus*. The project evolves around walking sessions and writing recensions. The actors perform walking sessions within a conflicting, gentrified area of London (Elephant & Castle). Passing through successive *loci*, they steal and distill local data (textual findings, discussions with residents, readings in libraries of

autonomous spaces, attendance in collective activities), as they intersect with fragments of the text *Locus solus* and very personal histories. As Kouros noted:

[...] during the walking sessions, wiki-works are undertaken. A conversations curatives wiki is a writing/erasing surface (like Freud's *wunderblok*) that accumulates (revised) texts and performs them as part of personal uttering programs. Roussel's narration is here interpreted as a mnemonic construction, a memory theatre: a walk in successive *loci*(spaces in a garden) where extraordinary events/machines stand out. At the same time, a process of forgetting is at work, based on successive concealments, on transformed signifiers that confuse any groundwork. Roussel's methods of language construction and his mnemotechnic obsessions are essential for these wiki recension acts. Wiki recension, works as an open public performance.

31The work *Laby Boogie-Woogie: A Device for Composing The Antithetical* also examined the relation of the text with the public sphere, by means of a spatial mechanism based on the metaphor of the labyrinth in New York City. The project uses the dialectic of antithetical elements in the form of displacement of the body in repetition and constant alternations in thirty-nine points at Manhattan where avenues intersect with streets. The rhythm of displacement was examined in terms of sound. The signs of the movement of the body were translated into signs in the city and were photographed during the night or the day (depending on the color). According to the architect who designed the project, Costas Alivizatos:

- **29** Alivizatos Costas, *Exhibition Catalogue, Locus Solus Benaki Museum*, London, Out of The Box Interme (...)

Rational structures may lead to irrational experiences. The defined structure describes itself as an inside and what it inscribes seems infinite. Where it ends is the opposite of where it starts. From the outside to the inside, from solidarity to the community, from silence to sound, from nature to the city, from the beauty to the beast a path and thread intervene separating and connecting. The path is the negative of the structure. The thirty-nine points, which frame it, force the body to rotate while moving. Identical and also unique these points transform linear movement to centrifugal and generate the feeling of endlessness²⁹.

Locus Solus II: Selected Practices

³²Site-specific installations encircled the estate at different and hidden locations at the Byzantine Museum in Athens. Sotiris Varsamis' video *Spatial Palindromes* was projected on the staircases of the estate. The video is based on the notion of the staircase as a palindromic metaphor and on the phonematic character of the writings of OuLiPo. The Oulipian method of «writing under constraints» («l'écriture sous contrainte») is an application of diverse Rousselian «procedures». Staircases can be regarded as a way of designing under constraint, like a text written under constraint. According to Varsamis:

- **30** Participating Artists: Efi Dementi, Ioannis Kouvidis and Stamatios Zografos. Vocals: Aggelos Abazo (...)

In stairs, as in palindromes, there is structurally a centre of balance where all of its distinct elements are mirrored—every step has its counter one—and although direction has two different alternatives, the route remains the same and can be read in a similar way. Even if time is linear, stairs can be experienced non-linearly, depending on direction, the location of the body inside the system, or circulation. Stairs have the ability of mirroring themselves as well as mirroring time. Using the same staircase throughout

time, you mirror yourself in different but similar timelines. It is a repetitive procedure where palindromic movement lies in the fact that, although the content is the same, various almost imperceptible factors create the difference. You can read the same content in different directions and at different times while remaining within a constrained symmetry. Staircases, although belonging to a system, work independently of it. They constitute a system within a system, related to it but at the same time referring to itself. They break the linearity of space and, by implication, the «irreversibility of time». This makes them a very particular spatial characteristic³⁰.

³³The palindromes are read both forwards and backwards as an attempt to examine its phonetic structure determining also the duration of the film. The combination of sound and image—both of them reflected—aims at the game of orientation and disorientation. The video projection can be played backwards or forwards, the significance of mirrored symmetry has been chosen as a main feature for the editing of the video throughout its entire length. Split screens always show the same plane mirrored with different time variations, same time flow in both screens, very slight time differences between screens, acceleration of time in only one, or completely different time sequences of the same plane. The outcome is a graphical interpretation of structural elements in an attempt to alter their meaning, as it occurs in a palindromic text.

- ³¹ See <http://artemispapageorgiou.wordpress.com/>

³⁴Martial Canterel's estate and his luxurious laboratories in the former mansion of the Duchess of Placentia (the Byzantine Museum) is surrounded by a garden. Inspired by Canterel's garden, the architect Artemis Papageorgiou³¹ designed an interactive garden as a responsive garden folly. In its space, it accommodates visions and

ideas emerging from the Renaissance garden tradition, landscape theory, and machine structures. During the period of the Renaissance, *fabriques* (follies) were structures, aimed at staging human interaction in the garden. It was structured through architectural typology and strategic positioning in the garden. People entered a certain mood and enacted possibilities, such as solitary contemplation, romance, artistic endeavors, or festivities. By using simulation techniques and mechanical tricks, narrative was overlaid with interaction, explicitly designed to engage visitors in a conceptual play between true and fake, natural wonders and human achievements.

35 The installation *Fabrique* forms a kinetic installation composed by three overhanging bike chains (the plants), three watering cans, and nine pots with soil. The plants respond with movement to the act of watering over specific pots. Three pots correspond to each plant. When one pot is watered the plant moves slightly. When three consecutive pots are watered the plant performs a complete choreography. Eventually, when all watering cans are used the three plants regulate their movement into a single choreography. According to Papageorgiou:

- **32** Papageorgiou Artemis, *Exhibition Catalogue, Locus Solus Benaki Museum*, London, Out of The Box Inte (...)

While the Renaissance folly uses the reproduction of classical myths to talk about man and his (superim) position in the garden, *Fabrique* uses the garden itself to talk about the process of engagement with landscape. Landscape is the scenario, an end in itself. In *Fabrique*, landscape emerges through a cycle of engagement and disengagement with the garden through a hybrid interface, the watering can and the virtual act of watering. *Fabrique* departs on investigating co-emergent relationships

with landscape through participation and collectivity. Only through collaboration and co-orchestration does landscape manifest within the garden, as choreographed bike chains, a form of mechanical plants. By merging boundaries between the mechanical and the natural through digital technologies, *Fabrique* attempts to interpret landscape as a result of engagement, and not of nature. In *Fabrique*, landscape is a state of performing³².

Locus Solus III: Selected Practices

- ³³<http://vimeo.com/16249446>; <http://vimeo.com/15691212>
- ³⁴<http://www.kompost.me/>
- ³⁵<http://www.iiiassociation.org/>
- ³⁶<http://www.wernernekes.de>
- ³⁷ Werner Nekes has compiled one of the most important private collections of artifacts documenting (...)

³⁶The final stage of the project, *Locus Solus III*, consisted of a series of art works, art practices, guided tours, performances for one spectator, «augmented readings» and happenings³³ with the participation of art collectives: Kom. Post³⁴, Flux Factory³⁵, I. I. I. I The Institute of Important Items³⁶ and the presentation of the collection «Media Magica³⁷» of media researcher and filmmaker Werner Nekes. The «Media Magica» series was one of the exhibits in the labyrinth examining Roussel's relation to pre-cinematographic experiments as well as developments in the early history of film, focusing on spatial and temporal principles of representation, research of perspective, montage, the illusion of movement and space. The cabinet of curiosities in the labyrinth installation consisted

of thirty-six stages that presented the different exhibits and performances by means of interaction with the audience.



■■■■■
Locus Solus-Out of the Box Intermedia

Kom. Post,

I was waiting alone(s) into the Black/Dark;

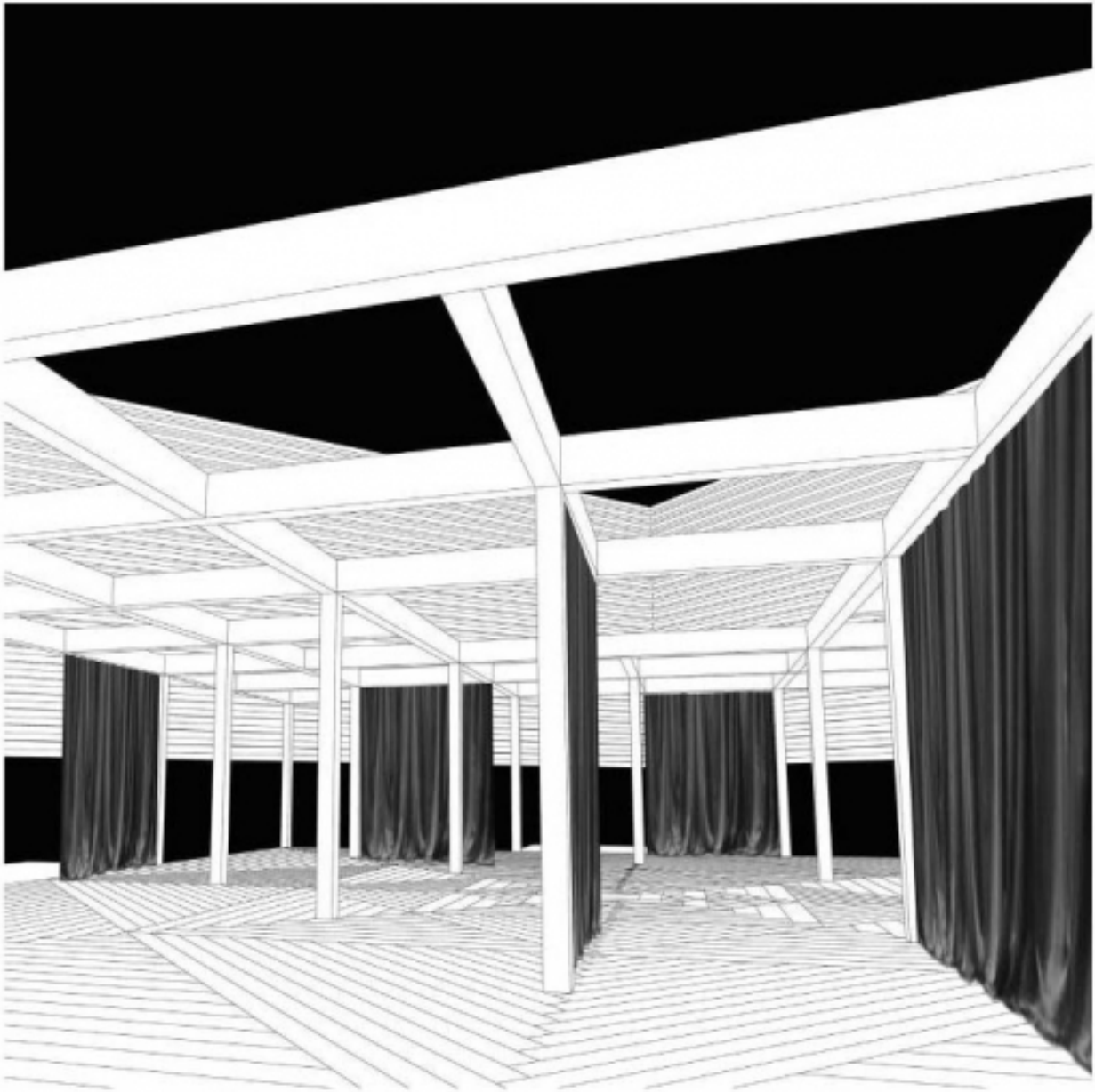
Room/Box: Performance for one spectator

Benaki Museum, Athens,

September–October 2010.



[REDACTED]
Locus Solus-Out of the Box Intermedia
Kom. Post,
I was waiting alone (s) into the Black/ Dark;
Room/Box: Performance for one spectator
Benaki Museum, Athens,
September–October 2010.



- **38** *September 1899* focuses on a very important event in the life of Raymond Roussel. This event took p (...) [...](#)

Locus Solus – Out of the Box Intermedia

I. I. I. I The International Institute Of Important Items, *Guided Tour: September 1899* **38**

Benaki Museum, Athens, September–October 2010.



■■■■■
Locus Solus-Out of the Box Intermedia
I.I.I.I The International Institute
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Benaki Museum, Athens,
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NOTES

1 Foucault Michel, *Death and the Labyrinth*, London, Continuum, 2004, p. 166.

2 See Howells David, «Formule Roussel», *Conference proceedings, Raymond Roussel: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Benaki Museum, Athens, October 2010, organised by Out Of The Box Intermedia.

3 A distinction is made between media understood as a means of transmitting signals bearing a written, aural or visual message and mediums as designating the very fabric or substance of which signals and messages are made. Different media borders and multimodalities are analysed as Medium/intermediality mode/multimodality material, sensorial, spatiotemporal modality, semiotic modality, tangible, perceptual, conceptual, basic, qualified, technical media.

See Elleström Lars, *Media Borders, Multimodality and Intermediality*, Palgrave, Macmillan, 2010.

4 See Barton Bruce, «Paradox as Process: Intermedial Anxiety and the Betrayals of Intimacy», *Theatre Journal*, vol. 61, n° 4, December 2009.

5 Gelikman Oleg, «Intermediality and Aesthetic Theory in Shklovsky's and Adorno's Thought», *Comparative Literature and Culture*, n° 13.3, 2011, p. 2–10.

6 Foucault Michel, *Death and the Labyrinth: The World of Raymond Roussel*, London, Continuum, 2007, p. 81.

7 Foucault Michel, loc. cit.

8 *Out of the Box Intermedia* a non-profit interdisciplinary arts organization actively committed to the research, development and

presentation of site-responsive and intermedia projects. The organization aims to promote international exchange of practice and knowledge in the arts (visual and sound art, dance, architecture, theatre), to research on the methods used in theatre and curatorial practices and to investigate points of intersection between the arts and the public sphere by means of interventions, collective actions, educational programmes and publications. Artistic Director: Sozita Goudouna.

9 According to Wagner the «Gesamtkunstwerk».

10 This technique inspired the group OuLiPo, also known as the «workshop of potential literature». Oulipo is a literary and artistic association founded in the 1960s, whose combinatoric methods and experimental concepts became influential for contemporary art. It was founded by Raymond Queneau and François Le Lionnais. Other notable members include novelists like Georges Perec and Italo Calvino, poets like Oskar Pastior or Jacques Roubaud, also known as a mathematician. The group defines the term « *littérature potentielle* » as «the seeking of new structures and patterns which may be used by writers in any way they enjoy». «*L'écriture sous contrainte*», «Writing under constraints», a method used by the OuLiPo Group, can be considered as an attempt to generalize and systematize diverse Rousselian «procedures».

11 The early stories «begin and end with phrases that are identical except for a single letter, but where each major word is used in a different sense». The procédé probably came to Roussel with two sentences, «*Les lettres du blanc sur les bandes du vieux billard*», and the near-identical «*Les lettres du blanc sur les bandes du vieux pillard*». Roussel decided to begin a story with the first sentence, which means «the letters [of the alphabet] in white chalk on the cushions of the old billiard table, and conclude it with the second, which, with the “b” in the last word transmogrified into a “p”, means “the letters sent by the white man about the hordes of the old plunderer”. »

12 London, April 2009, <http://vimeo.com/5459210>

13 Raff Colin, *Raymond Roussel (1877–1933), an Idiot Savant Without Idiocy*, New York, New York Press, 29 May 2001.

14 <http://vimeo.com/5459260>

15 *Locus Solus Public: Conversations Curatives*, is a project that consisted of various methods for collecting written and oral texts. The Aylesbury Collecting Action was one of the methods used for collecting data. The successive pages of Roussel's books *Locus Solus* and *How I Wrote Certain of My Books* were placed in successive garage doors around the interior courtyard of Aylesbury (block Gayhurst 1–61), in such a way that the books could be read by walking the perimeter of the courtyard, clockwise. This action was a performance of field and networks in the city. Informal talks with residents were produced during and after the action. The conversations were collected as part of the walking session works, to be used as base material for personal uttering recensions, during the project. A Wiki recension was also produced as one of the methods of collecting data. According to the artist and coordinator, Panos Kouros, *Conversations Curatives* (talking cure) is an active role for Canterel. *Conversations Curatives* is a found *Locus Solus* phrase used as a critical notion to destabilize *Locus Solus*, and representation. *Locus Solus Public* produces a shifting space of proximity between invited actors, social spaces in Elephant & Castle, and Roussel's novel *Locus Solus*. The project evolves around walking sessions and writing recensions. The actors perform walking sessions within a conflicting, gentrified area of London (Elephant & Castle). Passing through successive loci, they steal and distill local data (textual findings, discussions with residents, readings in libraries of autonomous spaces, attendance in collective activities), as they intersect with fragments of the text *Locus solus* and very personal histories. As Kouros noted: during the walking sessions, wiki-works are undertaken. A *conversations_curatives*

wiki is a writing/erasing surface (like Freud's wunderblock) that accumulates (revised) texts and performs them as part of personal uttering programs. Roussel's narration is here interpreted as a mnemonic construction, a memory theatre: a walk in successive loci (spaces in a garden) where extraordinary events/machines stand out. At the same time, a process of forgetting is at work, based on successive concealments, on transformed signifiers that confuse any groundwork. Roussel's methods of language construction and his mnemotechnic obsessions are essential for these wiki recension acts. Wiki recension, works as an open public performance.

<http://conversationscuratives.pbworks.com/>

http://www.flickr.com/photos/panos_kouros/sets/72157617484232916

, Aylesbury Collecting Action open public performance. Working team:

Panos Kouros with Elena Chronopoulou, Nora Demjaha, Giota

Dimitropoulou, Athena Kokla, Elephant & Castle, London, April, 2009.

Laboratory for Visual Arts, Department of Architecture, University of Patras.

16 The Byzantine and Christian Museum was founded in 1914. From 1930 on it has been housed in the «Ilisia» mansion, which belonged to the Duchess of Placentia and was built in 1848 by the architect Stamatis Kleanthes. It was transformed into a museum by the architect Aristotle Zachos. The collections of the Byzantine Museum show the course of Greek art from the 4th to the 19th century. They comprise sculptural works, paintings and small works of all sorts. These works represent the artistic production of the Greek area, and other regions both central and peripheral of the Byzantine empire and subsequently of Hellenism on into post-Byzantine times. <http://www.byzantinemuseum.gr/>

17 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CKCvEraFdwY>

18 Martial Canterel's Estate and his luxurious laboratories in the former Mansion of the Duchess of Placentia (the Byzantine Museum) is

surrounded by a garden. Inspired by Canterel's Garden, the architect Artemis Papageorgiou designed an interactive garden as a responsive garden folly. In its space, it accommodates visions and ideas emerging from the Renaissance garden tradition, landscape theory, and machine structures. During the period of the Renaissance, fabriques (follies) were structures, aimed at staging human interaction in the garden. It was structured through architectural typology and strategic positioning in the garden. People entered a certain mood and enacted possibilities, such as solitary contemplation, romance, artistic endeavors, or festivities. By using simulation techniques and mechanical tricks, narrative was overlaid with interaction, explicitly designed to engage visitors in a conceptual play between true and fake, natural wonders and human achievements. The installation *Fabrique* forms a kinetic installation composed by three overhanging bike chains (the plants), three watering cans, and nine pots with soil. The plants respond with movement to the act of watering over specific pots. Three pots correspond to each plant. When one pot is watered the plant moves slightly. When three consecutive pots are watered the plant performs a complete choreography. Eventually, when all watering cans are used the three plants regulate their movement into a single choreography. According to Papageorgiou: While the Renaissance folly uses the reproduction of classical myths to talk about man and his (superimposed) position in the garden, *Fabrique* uses the garden itself to talk about the process of engagement with landscape. Landscape is the scenario, an end in itself. In *Fabrique*, landscape emerges through a cycle of engagement and disengagement with the garden through a hybrid interface, the watering can and the virtual act of watering. *Fabrique* departs on investigating co-emergent relationships with landscape through participation and collectivity. Only through collaboration and co-orchestration does landscape manifest within the garden, as choreographed bike chains, a form of mechanical plants. By merging boundaries between the mechanical and the natural through digital technologies, *Fabrique* attempts to interpret landscape as a result of

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19 The final stage of the project, *Locus Solus III*, consisted of a series of art works, art practices, guided tours, performances for one spectator, «augmented readings» and happenings (<http://vimeo.com/16249446> <http://vimeo.com/15691212>) with the participation of art collectives: *Kom. Post*, *Flux Factory*, *I. I. I. I The Institute of Important Items* and the presentation of the collection «Media Magica» of media researcher and filmmaker Werner Nekes. The «Media Magica» series was one of the exhibits in the labyrinth examining Roussel's relation to pre-cinematographic experiments as well as developments in the early history of film, focusing on spatial and temporal principles of representation, research of perspective, montage, the illusion of movement and space. The cabinet of curiosities in the labyrinth installation consisted of thirty-six stages that presented the different exhibits and performances by means of interaction with the audience.

20 The Benaki Museum ranks among the major institutions that have enriched the material assets of the Greek state. It is also the oldest museum in Greece operating as a Foundation under Private Law. Through its extensive collections that cover several different cultural fields and its more general range of activities serving more than one social need, the Benaki Museum is perhaps the sole instance of a complex structure within the broader network of museum foundations in Greece.
<http://www.benaki.gr/>

21 <http://vimeo.com/16502937>

22 Andrea Palladio (1508–1580), one of the greatest Italian architects crafted a new architectural language derived from classical sources yet shaped to fulfil the functional demands and aesthetic aspirations of his own age, his town palaces and country villas that influenced subsequent generations of European and American architects.

23 See Deleuze Gilles, «The Brain is the Screen: an Interview with Gilles Deleuze», The *Brain in the Screen: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Cinema*, Gregory Flaxman(dir.), Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2000, p. 367. Translated by Marie Thérèse Guirgis.

24 Balint Bolygo's *Trace* is a sculptural device that alludes to scientific discoveries and pseudoscientific concepts such as phrenology, physiognomy, and craniometry. A revolving plaster cast of the head of Danton is slowly deconstructed into a mathematical diagram that changes as time passes. *Trace* is a generative work where the head becomes the code for a complex mechanical algorithm. The plaster head is the "source code" for the "Da Vinci"-like contraption that literally feels the undulations of the human head and converts these features into a spiralling topographical map of the 3-dimensional object.

25 The sculpture *A Matter of Life and Death* is an installation that comprises a pair of transparent acrylic spheres each containing a spinning water vortex. The speed, height and rotation of each vortex is governed live by data from the United Nations population clock. One vortex reacting to the births in the world and the other to the deaths in the world in a poetic display of human-kind's life and death on this planet. They highlight how our world has changed and become a global society through new technologies.

26 For example «stealing data», organized meetings and interviews, informal talks, chance encounters, readings in autonomous spaces, meetings, discussions with residents, interviews with residents, city texts, collecting action in Aylesbury block Gayhurst 1-61 etc., in different places that are not predefined, but are revealed during walking processes (sessions).

27 The wiki works as a textual performance space.

28 <http://conversationscuratives.pbworks.com/>http://www.flickr.com/photos/panos_kouros/sets/72157617484232916/ Aylesbury Collecting Action open public performance. Working team: Panos Kouros with Elena Chronopoulou, Nora Demjaha, Giota Dimitropoulou, Athena Kokla, Elephant & Castle, London, April, 2009. Laboratory for Visual Arts, Department of Architecture, University of Patras.

29 Alivizatos Costas, *Exhibition Catalogue, Locus Solus Benaki Museum*, London, Out of The Box Intermedia Editions, 2010.

30 Participating Artists: Efi Dementi, Ioannis Kouvidis and Stamatios Zografos. Vocals: Aggelos Abazoglou. For more information please visit <http://outoftheboxintermedia.org>

31 See <http://artemisapageorgiou.wordpress.com/>

32 Papageorgiou Artemis, *Exhibition Catalogue, Locus Solus Benaki Museum*, London, Out of The Box Intermedia Editions, 2010.

33 <http://vimeo.com/16249446>; <http://vimeo.com/15691212>

34 <http://www.kompost.me/>

35 <http://www.iiiassociation.org/>

36 <http://www.wernernekes.de>

37 Werner Nekes has compiled one of the most important private collections of artifacts documenting 500 years of pre-cinema. He is also a collector of historical books, scientific objects and visual toys from the early period of mediaarts. His extensive collection comprises five centuries of rare objects. In his film series, «Media Magica», he guides us through his unique collection, as through a museum. He encounters the Camera Obscura, the Magic Lantern, and peep-shows from the seventeenth century, the artistry of shadow theatre.

38 *September 1899* focuses on a very important event in the life of Raymond Roussel. This event took place in the North of France while he was on military duty. Based on very accurate documents, this guided tour will try to reconstruct what really happened at the time. The tour is also an occasion to learn more about trips to the Moon, and sword and sandal films.