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Wild Imaginings

Tripping with Tatiana Trouvé

The memory does not at all function in a precise way. Rather, it is chaotic, and as such, very lively. In Tatiana Trouvé's view, the process of reminiscence or recollection allows things to change and new things to be created. And therein her projects crystallise. The artist's work, at its deepest level, is based on time and shaped by literature. It comes in different forms and most often incorporates architectural interventions. Her inspiration is drawn from present realities, which in her works are more or less exaggerated and distorted, bringing what's absent towards the present and, as a result, modifying it. DAMN° visited Trouvé in her Paris studio.

ANNA SANSOM



"Central Park was constructed to represent American society, and each of its gates is named after a corpus that built America, such as Engineers' Gate", informs the Italian, Paris-based artist. "So I began thinking about the paths traversing the park and decided to measure them all." To do this, Trouvé worked with engineers and located 212 of them; "like the post code of New York", she adds excitedly. She then made scaled-down maps of the park and had the numerous paths sewn onto them using cotton thread, after which she transferred the lengths of the paths to lengths of thread, and wound that onto the bobbins. "It's the most precise work I've ever done", she says. "We'll walk past this corridor of bobbins as if we're crossing an archive of something immaterial that has become solid. I wanted to find something related to the park, so that the visitor can say: All the space I have crossed is here, physically."

Tatiana Trouvé takes a cerebral approach to her work. Making installations, sculptures, and drawings that explore temporalities and perspectives in thought-provoking, enigmatic ways, she investigates time, space, and multi-dimensionality, where ideas of memories and fictions collide with those of actuality and architecture. All of this coalesces in a new large-scale project sited at the entrance to Central Park (commissioned by New York's Public Art Fund), which is being unveiled in March. The piece, *Desire Lines*, is composed of three rectangular, vertical sculptures whereby thread, the same length as that of all the paths in Central Park, is spooled onto hundreds of enormous bobbins.

Conceiving the project was hardly straightforward, though. "It really was a problem, because, for me, Central Park is a work in itself with all the sculptures there", she remarks. "I asked myself: What can you do as a sculptor, as putting one sculpture on top of another is really ridiculous. I wanted to begin with the idea of equivalence, and thought that what constitutes Central Park is how the path that traverses it is very special because it's laid-out for relaxing and running, but it's also crossed by a highway. So it was about reconciling these two worlds – that of strolling and that of American business, but in a simplified way." This notion of two worlds, or doubling, also exists in the title – *Desire Lines*. "What I like is how these words refer to the beaten-down paths of grass

LES INDÉFINIS, 2014
© Mamco, photo: Ilmari Kalkkinen

TATIANA TROUVÉ WITH HER
DOG LULA IN HER STUDIO
(facing page)
Photo: Laurent Edeline





that people walk-on in order to move more quickly.” Trouvé was also thinking about the history of walking, such as the walk of [Immanuel] Kant when he had to think about reason. “I like how, by walking, we discover lots of other spaces.”

AT HOME, AWAY

Born in Cosenza in Calabria, southern Italy, Trouvé has been based in Paris for the last two decades. She spent part of her childhood (from the ages of 8 to 15) in Dakar, Senegal, where her father was a professor of architecture, which partly explains the architectural sensibility running through her work. We're meeting on a balmy September afternoon in her studio in Montreuil, an upcoming, multicultural suburb of Paris that has become popular with artists, due to its affordability. Trouvé's property – her studio occupies the first two floors and her home is on the third – is located in an ordinary-looking street. But inside, one feels whisked away to somewhere entirely different. The ordered and minimalist studio has large patio doors opening onto a leafy terrace with ivy creeping up over the wall. This inside-outside dialogue resonates with how, in her practice, Trouvé creates scenarios where boundaries between interior and exterior collapse or seem imperceptible.



Following close on the heels of her show *The Longest Echo*, at the MAMCO in Geneva, Trouvé's travelling exhibition *I tempi doppi* (Double Times), opened at the Kunsthalle Nürnberg, Germany, this past November. At MAMCO, Trouvé modified parts of some of the rooms, juxtaposing her own works with permanent pieces by artists such as Gordon Matta-Clark and Christo. “I like imagining that the path of a visit is also part of the experience, because my work is very linked to the architecture of the museum”, she informs. In a ground-floor gallery, Trouvé displayed three series of drawings: In-



PREPARED SPACE, 2014
(facing page)
Kunstmuseum Bonn,
Photo: Achim Kukulies

INSTALLATION OF DRAWINGS
© Mamco, photo: Ilmari Kalkkinen

350 POINTS TOWARDS
INFINITY, 2009
© Mamco, photo: Ilmari Kalkkinen

tranquillity, Deployments, and Remanence (2008-2010). Instead of hanging them on the walls, she placed them on aluminium structures made especially for the show. "From the way the drawings were superposed, we had the impression of being in a forest", she says.

JUST AN ELUSION

There's an elusive quality to many of Trouvé's drawings, where architectural interiors and landscapes are abstracted and fragmented in a multi-perspectival manner, as if certain elements are concealed from view. "I never represent the façades of spaces or the exteriors of buildings; it's often only very simple perspectives of interiors", she stipulates, adding that hand-drawn architecture from the 1950s and 60s interests her most. Collaged lines of copper traverse the surface like electric currents, while bleached patches blur borders, the spaces becoming ghostly and measureless. Trouvé's figureless scenes,

with their opened doors and windows, are caught in a just-before or just-after temporality. Indeed, her black-on-black drawings, Remanence, convey the idea of witnessing a space straight after its sleepwalking protagonists have left. As she says, "The space that I construct is already inhabited by a dimension that is my own, and perhaps in this dimension, one no longer knows how to situate oneself. I think that if there's a fiction in my work, it's quite abstract and dreamlike."

Trouvé makes an analogy between this imaginary aspect of her work and the African, oral tradition of the storytelling griots, who, as she explains, "go from house to house in the village and tell you about where you come from and who you are. It's a romanticised history and a transmission of culture that's achieved through singing, and because it's told orally, it's modified each time and is completely re-inhabited by the person singing, who has, in turn, inherited it from somebody else."





THE STUFF OF LIFE

This idea of memory and the doubling of time re-occurs in sculptural pieces such as *I tempi doppi* (2013); two looping lines, each with an illuminated light bulb at one end and a bronze light bulb at the other. “We’ve all had the experience of thinking: I’ve already lived this moment, and that’s the only time the past and present overlap”, says Trouvé. “This sculpture also has to do with black matter in space that seems inert but is a source of immoderate energy. There’s no electrical cable between the two light bulbs, and we have the impression that the black bulb is giving energy to the shining one.”

The piece is like a drawing in space, as is *Prepared Space*, made in homage to John Cage. Other works allude to human absence, even though the body is never shown. *The Guardian* (2013): a black chair, a cane rod, and a plastic bag, suggests the daily break taken by a museum guard. Indeed, Trouvé’s work evokes a reflection on the human body, even though



The Guardian, 2013 (main image)
From the exhibition: *The Longest Echo*
© Mamco, photo: Ilmari Kalkkinen

I TEMPI DOPPI, 2013/2014 (insert)
Exhibition view, 2014
Museion, Bolzano, Italy
Photo: Nicolò Degiorgis



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INCHOATIVITY, 2014 (1/2)
From the exhibition:
The Longest Echo
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THE LONGEST ECHO, 2014 (3)
Exhibition view
© Mamco, photo: Ilmari Kalkkinen

PREPARED SPACE, 2014 (4)

the body is never shown. Interestingly, she describes how a documentary about a dwarf made a big impression on her and on her approach to making sculpture. “Finding himself completely maladapted to the construction of our standardised world, this small-sized person began to create a parallel dimension, saying to himself: Nothing is adapted to being around me; climbing up a chair is like climbing a mountain; it’s not my world even though I live in it. So I’m going to visit it like a tourist”, recounts Trouvé. “I found this magnificent, because it’s about him knowing how to turn a situation around with an almost subversive attitude, so that his life would become an aesthetic experience. This led me to make installations that were very small, at a dwarf-like scale, imprisoned by two dimensions, which we would have to find a way around.”

MEANINGFULNESS

Just as Trouvé disrupts ordered patterns and varies scales to create unexpected tensions, she exploits pre-conceived notions about how objects feel, by casting them in heavy materials. “I like making sculptures of cardboard boxes in bronze or concrete, when the material should be extremely light”, she exudes. “What interests me is the physical perception of the artwork and imagining its weight and materiality. I try to imagine how the things that surround us can be inhabited and manipulated without us touching them.” Bronze sculptures of suitcases, mattresses, cushions, and cardboard boxes – the dwellings of the homeless – relate to “the architecture of life”.



As Trouvé points out, “The mattress has very standard dimensions, but it’s the only object where a whole life takes place. We practically come into the world on a mattress, and we leave it, if all goes well, on a mattress, too. It’s a place of intimacy, unconsciousness, sexuality, resting, working, and illness. My piece Waterfall, which has water trickling out of the mattress buttons, is a way of imagining how this object has absorbed so many things, which are being reproduced like tears.” Waterfall was included in the exhibition *A Space Called Public*, curated by Elmgreen & Dragset in the city of Munich, and subtly revisited the notion of the public fountain. It crossed Trouvé’s mind to exhibit a similar piece in Central Park in New York, but, on second thoughts, she considered that the park deserved better than that. As she says, “For me, Central Park has so much history that I couldn’t just put a mattress in front of the entrance, it would have been meaningless.” ‹



Tatiana Trouvé: *I tempi doppi* is at the Kunsthalle Nürnberg, Germany, until 8 February 2015. kunstkulturquartier.de/kunsthalle

Desire Lines will be installed in Central Park, New York on 3 March 2015, where it will remain for six months.

Maquette and drawings for the Desire Lines project
Photos: Laurent Edeline