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Tatiana Trouvé's non-human geographies

On the occasion of her exhibition at the Centre Pompidou, the artist discusses her childhood memories of Dakar and the importance of non-human consciousness in challenging established ways of seeing the world

Pedro Morais

Tatiana Trouvé has always depicted inhabited spaces – even when there is no human presence. Whether through sculptures or drawings, these spaces are either populated by ghostly entities – redolent of djinns, beings that hark back to her childhood in Africa – or reinvent scales and temporalities, much like dreams or memory. For her exhibition ‘Le grand atlas de la désorientation’ (The Great Atlas of the Disorientation) at the Centre Pompidou, she expands this understanding of the world beyond the human perspective, and invites in other, non-European cosmologies that open themselves up to animal and non-human perception.

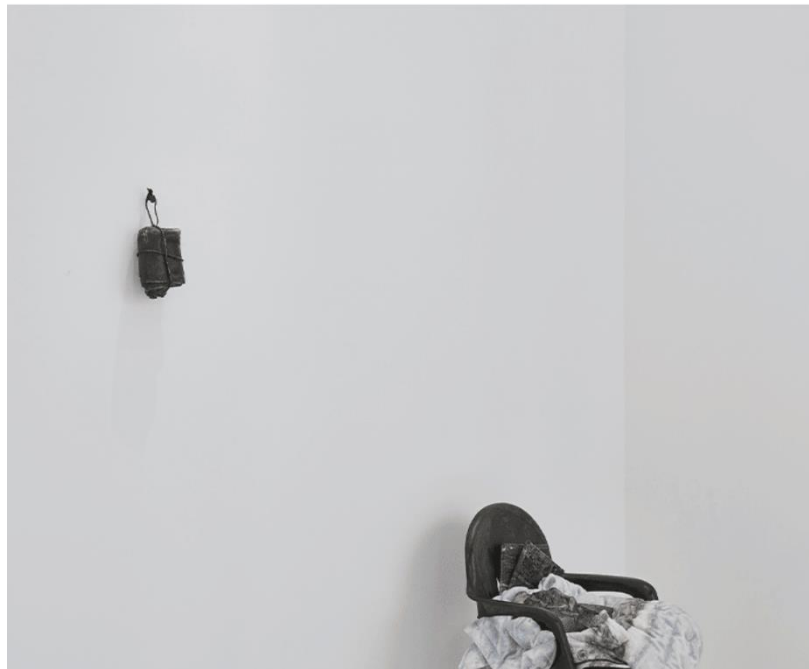


Installation view of Tatiana Trouvé's exhibition 'Le grand atlas de la désorientation' at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2022. Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian. Photograph by Thomas Lannes.

Although one can spot in her drawings an interest in modernist interior design – supposedly rational and functionalist – there's a sense of the unknown in her work. A sculpture garden is only visible through curtains and grids made of bronze, wood, and shells that depict maps created by the peoples of Oceania. On the floor a large drawing depicts different types of tracks,

whether animal (the paths of ants or the olfactory map of wolves), human (the ‘wander lines’ of Fernand Deligny, a special education teacher who studied the movements of autistic children), microscopic (a cytoplasm and neutrinos, which are elementary particles), or cosmic (maps from aboriginal dreams). Meanwhile the *Guardians* – chairs piled up with books and personal belongings – offer differing views of the world and appear to watch over the exhibition. Among the mainly female authors of the books are the Swiss writer and sex worker Grisélidis Réal and the 17th-century painter Artemisia Gentileschi. Other authors, such as Fernando Pessoa, explore the possibility of multiple identities.

Trouvé doesn’t only aim to disorient us, she also strives to decenter the human and Western perspective by bringing together other geographies, invisible entities, and animal consciousnesses.



Installation view of Tatiana Trouvé's exhibition 'Le grand atlas de la désorientation', Gagosian Paris, rue de Castiglione, Paris, 2022. Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian. Photograph by Thomas Lannes.

Pedro Morais: What role do your childhood memories of Dakar play in your work?

Tatiana Trouvé: I lived in Dakar from the age of 7 to 15, a pivotal age linked to the passage from childhood to adolescence. From this period I have retained the memory of a different relationship to time, free from organized schedules. Time was an open invitation, a free relationship – when someone invited you to something, there were no constraints, it could happen tomorrow or in a month. Short and long periods of time were intertwined, in dialogue, nothing was defined nor compartmentalized. In addition, I was influenced by djinns, those beings that make themselves known while remaining invisible.

One finds something reminiscent of djinns in the *Guardians*, these bronze chairs with stone elements that bear witness to human presences now gone. I first thought of these *Guardians* as benevolent figures to look after other works in group exhibitions, the radical opposite of an imposing work. Through the items placed upon these chairs, one can imagine people and spirits

– the books express different points of view on the world that I like to display together in the exhibition.



Tatiana Trouvé in her studio in Montreuil. Photograph by Thomas Lannes.

In what way did you want to shift the Centre Pompidou's relationship to space?

This space has often been partitioned from and closed to the outside. I hung curtains in such a way that the outside melds with the inside, allowing visitors to see the sculptures against the light or through the windows from the street. I am interested in architects such as Carlo Scarpa, whose architecture makes inhospitable elements hospitable by inviting them in – for instance, water in Venice – or Ugo La Pietra and his aphorism 'inhabiting means being at home everywhere'. It does not mean that one imposes one's presence, but rather that one seeks to inhabit the city as an intimate space, by constructing other relationships between oneself and the urban environment, by varying one's points of view, shifting one's gaze.

In my exhibition, the space is constructed by the drawings, which are either hanging or suspended, their different formats creating perspectives and inviting the viewer to move their gaze, allowing for a lateral vision. The multitude of points of view is played out visually just as it is in the *Guardians* and through the books. I'm very interested in the work of the anthropologist Barbara Glowczewski, who studied how the Warlpiri people of Australia integrate dreaming into their daily decisions and live in the Dreamtime. Dreaming is an important material for my work. Dreams don't follow a chronological temporality, nor do they impose any hierarchies – I would like visitors to have access to different levels of reality.



Tatiana Trouvé, Il mondo delle voci, from the series 'Les Dessouvenus', 2022, 260 x 400 x 5 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian. Photograph by Florian Kleinfenn.

You have mapped different types of paths – human, animal, and atomic – on a drawing covering the entire floor of the exhibition. In your hanging drawings you sometimes show stones placed in interiors, or museum benches in vacant lots. Is this an invitation to abandon a gaze centered solely on the human?

Glowczewski precisely evokes a way of conceiving the world – one of aboriginal totemism that does not distinguish between body and spirit and between living beings, one that removes the boundary between us and the spirits of the Dreaming beings. There is no difference between the status of a human and that of an ant – the elements are interdependent. They exist through their connections. On the floor of the exhibition space at the Centre Pompidou I have reproduced the cartography of a Dream journey in continuity with other ways of crossing the space, including those of ants. The visitors thus explore different worlds, they walk inside different ways of perceiving the world. It is when we are disoriented that we start to look. This ‘intranquillity’ can become a way of connecting things and here I use copper or the lines of the drawings as conductive forms that take us from one level to another, seeking to connect rather than fragment them.



Installation view of Tatiana Trouvé's exhibition 'Le grand atlas de la désorientation', Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2022. Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian. Photograph by Thomas Lannes.

Do you introduce this dream-induced disorientation into the way you make your drawings?

To draw, I use pre-colored papers, which are thus not neutral, and I smooth them out onto a canvas before spraying bleach on their surface. This forms a series of stains that will become the starting point for drawings. It is the coexistence of different levels of reality in the drawing that can lead us back to the dream – it starts with these alterations and continues when I let myself be carried away by intuitions. For the series of drawings 'From March to May' [2020], made on several international newspapers' front pages during the first lockdown, I wanted the world to come to my house at a time when we could go nowhere. It was between the drawings and the front pages that the artwork played out, during this very odd period when confinement to our homes meant a clear separation from the outside world. In these drawings I also summoned animals accused of being responsible for this historic moment on a planetary scale.



*Tatiana Trouvé, Untitled, from the series 'Les Dessouvenus', 2022, 260 x 400 x 5 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian.
Photograph by Florian Kleinfenn.*

If your work is related to the non-linear functioning of memory, what place do you give to forgetting?

I called one of my series 'Les Dessouvenus', after a Breton expression that refers to people who have lost their memory. For me, 'the letting go of memory' – *se désouvenir* – is not to forget, it is not something that one suffers and that creates a lack. Memory loss, when pathological, can be experienced as a fatality. But memory is constantly in the process of being lost and the erasing of contours is what allows something else to re-emerge.



Installation view of Tatiana Trouvé's exhibition 'Le grand atlas de la désorientation', Gagosian Paris, rue de Castiglione, Paris, 2022. Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian. Photograph by Thomas Lannes.

Pedro Morais is an art critic, curator, and teacher of contemporary art at the École supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Bordeaux.

Tatiana Trouvé is represented by Gagosian (New York, Beverly Hills, London, Paris, Le Bourget, Geneva, Basel, Gstaad, Rome, Athens, Hong Kong), Perrotin (Paris, Dubai, New York, Hong Kong, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai), and König Galerie (Berlin, Seoul, Vienna).

'The Great Atlas of Disorientation'

June 8 – August 22, 2022 at the Centre Pompidou, Paris

'Tatiana Trouvé'

June 8 – September 3, 2022 at Gagosian Paris, rue de Castiglione