

Barbara Le Maître

The film is the museum: Ken Jacobs, Gus Van Sant, Mark Lewis, and Pierre Perrault

2019

<https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/4182>

Veröffentlichungsversion / published version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Le Maître, Barbara: The film is the museum: Ken Jacobs, Gus Van Sant, Mark Lewis, and Pierre Perrault. In: *NECSUS. European Journal of Media Studies*, Jg. 8 (2019), Nr. 1, S. 15–30. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/4182>.

Erstmalig hier erschienen / Initial publication here:

<https://necsus-ejms.org/the-film-is-the-museum-ken-jacobs-gus-van-sant-mark-lewis-and-pierre-perrault/>

Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer Creative Commons - Namensnennung - Nicht kommerziell - Keine Bearbeitungen 4.0/ Lizenz zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu dieser Lizenz finden Sie hier:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Terms of use:

This document is made available under a creative commons - Attribution - Non Commercial - No Derivatives 4.0/ License. For more information see:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

The film *is* the museum: Ken Jacobs, Gus Van Sant, Mark Lewis, and Pierre Perrault

Barbara Le Maître, translated from the French by Claire Labarbe[1]

NECSUS 8 (1), Spring 2019: 15–30

URL: <https://necsus-ejms.org/the-film-is-the-museum-ken-jacobs-gus-van-sant-mark-lewis-and-pierre-perrault/>

Keywords: cultural heritage, curatorial gesture, film, museum

In the last twenty years, the question of the relationship between cinema and the museum has been raised in multiple theoretical and practical contexts, giving rise to a number of discussions about the exhibition of moving images, the use of the medium of film or of specific works as part of installations, as well as the ways in which the cinematographic set-up informs works which are not strictly speaking filmic.[2] The purpose of this text is in a sense to reverse the way in which the question has been posed by shifting the conversation from the film as object *for* the museum to that of the film *as* museum. More specifically, far from focusing on didactic productions which form an important part of contemporary museology, our present purpose is rather to speculate on a few aspects of a hitherto unconsidered ‘curatorial project’.[3] The latter can be traced amongst a series of filmic objects underpinned by a variety of intentions: none of the films chosen for this study were explicitly conceived with the curatorial intention evidenced in the analysis.

The very idea of a curatorial project is open to discussion and can be seen to include a variety of aspects since, to quote François Mairesse,

there is in fact no defining centre to the curatorial project. The idea that collecting, assembling, managing or curating objects constitute the linchpin of curatorial activities has been refuted by history. [...] It follows that no endeavours can be historically identified as the *sine qua non* conditions sufficient to define a curatorial project. [4]

Taking as my starting point the diversity inherent in institutional museums as well as the constant redefinition of the project which those institutions nonetheless have in common, I will present the hypothesis of a delocalisation (accompanied by a transformation) of most of the functions traditionally associated with the museum. Those functions can now happen elsewhere, as for instance in (and via) certain films. Ultimately, that which I refer to as ‘curatorial gesture’ encompasses the entirety or part of a necessarily polymorphous curatorial project which is essentially redefined through film.

This text is an invitation to consider cinema (and its films) in a new light, a light which, without obscuring the double capacity of the medium to represent and fictionalise, also reveals its curatorial powers. So what is at stake exactly? First the ways in which, at times, a film identifies and highlights specific heritage – be it a paper print, a *tableau* or any other features of primitive cinema, as is the case with Ken Jacobs and Mark Lewis, who share a taste for the origins of cinema (as will be shown). Besides retrieving imaging acts which are more or less remote in the aesthetic past –and consequently widening the concept of legacy –the examples studied here will also give us an opportunity to define the idea of ‘curatorial powers’ in the sense of a film which can be transformed into an exhibition site (Ken Jacobs) or an act of restoration (Gus Van Sant) of a past whose transmission is always accompanied with a reformulation –an aspect which is given precedence in Dominique Poulot’s definition of heritage.[5] Alternating between the analysis of different curatorial functions, I will insist on the ways in which, in each instance, the film allows for a reconsideration of the curatorial gesture. In a final section devoted to Pierre Perrault and the cultural (rather than æsthetic) heritage recorded in his works, I will go as far as suggesting that cinema may have contributed to the invention of a new form of curating.

Ken Jacobs: The film as means of preservation and exhibition site

As the first and probably the most explicit example of a film which is also a curatorial gesture, I will turn to a film by Ken Jacobs made around 1969-1971 which uses as its source a 1905 film produced by the Biograph Company and attributed to Billy Bitzer. Both films are titled *Tom Tom the Piper’s Son*. Jacobs’ film has received much critical attention in recent years, notably in a special issue of the journal *Exploding*, in which Emeric de Lastens wrote:

Jacobs's film is part of a long process of conservation, duplication and restoration of a reel constantly threatened with disintegration, obliteration and oblivion [...]. It is surely not far-fetched to imagine that Jacobs may have envisaged his project in line with that of a curator.[6]

In practice, the cinematographer got hold of a paper print of the 1905 film[7] and then decided to direct his own film based on an exhaustive (re)filming of the primitive film. The focus of my attention here is not so much Jacobs' formal exploration of the original *Tom Tom* –that is to say everything that goes beyond the filming itself, including flicker, freeze-frames, variations in projection speed, selection, repetition and enlargement of details –as much as Jacobs' curatorial gesture. Quite literally, indeed, Jacobs transferred a filmic object which only survived in a fragmentary and deteriorated form onto a slightly more durable format. In doing so, Jacobs simultaneously renewed the distribution of the original film.

I will argue that, to a certain extent, the first film is exhibited inside Jacobs' film –the film is presented twice in its entirety, from start to end, so as to be appreciated as an object in its own right rather than one underpinning a narrative it would be subservient to – thus transforming what we commonly call a film into a 'museum for (primitive) cinema'. The museum contains only one work. In that sense, we are confronted with a museum without a collection. What is more, this is probably the first museum to be spread across as many original sites as there are copies of Jacobs' film –including all the reels, as well as, since the 2000s, video copies and the DVD release. Mechanical reproduction, which is a defining characteristic of filmic works, here characterises the very location of the museum. Thus years before the internet and digital museums, Jacobs invented the 'portable-reproducible' museum.[8]

The example of Jacobs' film should not however suggest that reappropriation cinema generally speaking (filmic quotations, found footage, and *tutti quanti*) necessarily implies that cinema has become its own museum. One can only speak of a curatorial purpose when the reworking encapsulates the original work in its entirety and gives it priority, meaning that, more than anything else, the new film must endeavour to showcase and foreground the original work.

Gus Van Sant: Restoration through imitation

The second example of a film as curatorial gesture – the contentious remake of Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) by Gus Van Sant (1998) – is more problematic. Van Sant's film is generally understood as an imitation of Hitchcock's original work. But it must straight away be pointed out that this imitation does not pretend to be the original. In other words, it is not a fake. Because of the fact that it is an imitation, one could not argue that Van Sant *preserves* Hitchcock's film, although the second *Psycho* reproduces the diegetic referent of the first (the script is the same and the sequential assembly is practically identical) as well as its actual referent (the same city, Phoenix, has been transposed from 1960 to 1998). At a stretch, one could say that Gus Van Sant preserves 'something' of Hitchcock's film (by using 'vintage' staging and editing). But it seems to me that in this instance, the idea of a filmic museum has relevance less in terms of conservation than in terms of restoration.

Restoring a painting or any other work of art is a complex operation, especially if one is to rely on Cesare Brandi's definition of the main principles of the process:

Restoration consists of the methodological moment in which the work of art is recognised, in its physical being, and in its dual aesthetic and historical nature, in view of its transmission to the future. [...] It is clear that the imperative to conserve is addressed generically to the work of art as a complex whole, but it focusses especially on the material in which the image is made manifest. [...] From this, the first axiom is clear: Only the material of a work of art is restored.

Brandi goes on to raise the fundamental question of an artwork's historicity:

It has been said that the work of art enjoys a dual historical nature. The first aspect of this coincides with the act that formed it, an act of creation by an artist in a certain time and place. The second derives from its existence in the individual consciousness, which at a given moment gives it, when and where it is, historicity in relation to that time and place. [...] The interval between when the work was created and the historical present (which keeps moving forward), is composed of the many historical 'presents' that have become the past. The work of art might retain traces of these transitions. [...] Accordingly, the second principle of restoration can be stated: *Restoration should aim to re-establish the potential oneness of the work of art, as long as this is possible without committing artistic or historical forgery, and without erasing every trace of the passage through time of the work of art.* [9]

Given that Van Sant ostensibly adds colour, shots, and even sound and visual motifs to an original work which remains materially absent, albeit sovereign in imagination, it may seem questionable to even use the word restoration.[10] Van Sant's 'restoration' evidently diverges from Brandi's first axiom, since it does not point to the materiality of Hitchcock's work. Nonetheless, Van Sant's film is socially calibrated to moral standards and censorship regulations. The contemporary film opens with sounds of couples making love in a hotel frequented by prostitutes. One shot reveals Viggo Mortensen's tattooed lower back as well as his naked buttocks. Later on, the blood of the heroine's all too visible wounds oozes into the shower, the colour of blood, followed by other naked buttocks, then more sexual intercourse, more or less solitary and equally brought to the fore through sound. More flesh, more blood, more nakedness, an increased vulgarity (absent from the original) and on the whole, a more explicit film. Thus acknowledging the changing threshold of how much crime and sex can be socially tolerated, Van Sant symbolically recreates the shock caused by Hitchcock's original film on its first release, that is to say the film's initial capacity to tear the social mesh, its power to impact having been lost through the passing of time.

While undoubtedly expressing the 'spirit of the times', Van Sant's brash replica of the original film paradoxically echoes Brandi's conception of the restoration process. First, the 1998 opus constitutes an addition which acknowledges Hitchcock's film as a work of art (it is a fact that only masterworks are worth imitating). Second, Brandi's definition is echoed in the original film's survival in the present moment of a conscience. Finally, Van Sant's film illustrates the passage of time which dilutes the contemporaneity of any artwork along with its times by transporting it through a 'succession of presents'. In brief, Van Sant's film enacts Brandi's principle of 'double historicity' mentioned above. And all this without producing a historical or aesthetic fake, in the sense that Van Sant's film does not supplant but rather complements Hitchcock's. In my view, Van Sant's film should not so much be understood as a remake than as the second wing of a diptych.

In any event, Van Sant's gesture is truly inventive in that it expands the notion of imitation by undertaking more than a (material) restoration, that is to say a restoration of the historicity and initial impact of the original.[11] And so an interesting museological principle emerges: that the restoration process deserves to be reconsidered through the lens of imitation. If one accepts the validity of such a hypothesis, restoration then amounts to two things. Restoration produces an object distinct from the supposedly altered original: it

produces *a form which works and restores at a distance*. Also, restoration as defined by Van Sant does not aspire to restoring the material unity of the original. Rather, it highlights another form of damage which can also be attributed to the passage of time, a time which ineluctably detaches works from the milieus they were produced in,[12] from all the former presents outside of which the initial intelligibility of those works gets lost (which does not mean that the work ceases to be intelligible, only that such intelligibility always needs to be reconstructed). Ultimately, as if providing a new style of *patina*, the 1998 version attests both to the passage of time and to the passage of the artwork through time as evoked by Cesare Brandi.

Van Sant's film was a commercial and critical failure and it was judged by many as a slightly too perfect remake. But as I have tried to demonstrate, the film does not operate as a remake. In particular, it does not impose itself over a referent it sinks into oblivion. According to Jacqueline Nacache,

when a film is *remade* and updated to suit 'modern tastes', the primary aim is not to renovate or restore an old film as if it were a monument but rather to use it as a solid basis to test (technological, ideological or aesthetic) innovations. [...] In film production, the remake warrants oblivion. It denies resemblance by trying to be as different as possible from the original.[13]

All in all, the restoration process I identify as taking place between the two versions of *Psycho* (I have shown that the 1998 version is the second part of a diptych) could very well turn out to be the exact opposite or the dialectic counterpart of a remake. The idea that the preservation and transmission of works of the past can steer clear of the material reality of those works equally applies to Mark Lewis' 2008 film *The Fight*, a third example of filmic museology.

Mark Lewis: The 'plastic formula' as aesthetic heritage

Lewis' five-minute silent film confronts the spectator with a

group of characters who threaten to engage in a fight on a market square. The film, which consists of a single scene, required meticulous direction of the actors. The actors were placed against a screen upon which the image of a market was back-projected as a stage setting. The great fluidity of the bodies, the freedom that it creates, the musicality of the movements [...]introduce a sensuality [...] nonetheless constrained: the characters never leave the frame and the actual fight never ends up taking place. A feeling of suspension and indecisiveness dominates the film, which

endlessly re-enacts the accidental aspect of the condensed script without ever attempting to bring it to completion. [14]

Let us add that, although without directly referring to it, *The Fight* cannot but evoke the first *tableau* in *Tom Tom the Piper's Son*. Indeed Lewis' film reinvents something like a 'plastic formula' inherited from primitive cinema and which the 1905 *Tom Tom* film provides a notable example of.

Constructed following the autarkic principle of the *tableau*, [15] the 1905 Biograph Company film combines a rather indecipherable foreground, where a multitude of characters gathering at a village fair swarm in all directions, with a background typical of the studio, in this instance a painted canvas inspired by an engraving by Hogarth. [16] In the first *tableau*, the accumulation of characters into a simultaneously compact and malleable mass is particularly striking. The human hive forms and unforms itself, to the rhythm of its creatures' constant gesticulations. It is difficult to tell what sense the 1905 spectator may have made of this pile of moving bodies. As for me, as soon as I try to disentangle this visual web, I find myself torn between a fascination for the plasticity of the mass and the desire to see it occulted or disaggregated so as to observe each and every one of the characters and movements which give the mass its consistence.

Mark Lewis' film is made from a single shot. In that sense, it comes closer to the *Vue Lumière* [17] than to a narrative told through a series of *tableaux* in the manner of Méliès. [18] On the one hand, Lewis' film reiterates the elasticity of a mass constantly dissolving and recomposing itself. On the other hand, the film revisits the heterogeneity of a scene whose foreground and background are constructed as separate entities before being assembled. Lewis' film however differs from the 1905 film in that the contemporary cinematographer substitutes what is commonly referred to as a *transparency* –the type of projection described above –for the painted canvas of the primitive film. In Lewis' film, the heterogeneity of the shot does not result from a part-filmic part-pictorial hybrid but rather from the polychronic assemblage of distinct periods in time and space.



Fig. 1: *The Fight* (Mark Lewis, 2008), high definition video, 5:31, film still courtesy and copyright the artist + serge le borgne, Paris.

When talking of a ‘plastic formula’ inherited from primitive cinema, I am referring to a specific conception and composition of the shot (in the studio) which, to summarise, resides in an arrangement combining spatial saturation (an excess of characters and movements in the foreground), the expansion of an essentially visual event (duration providing less a means of understanding the action than of appreciating the formal variations affecting the group of characters), a heterogeneous image and the type of autarkic shot theorised by Burch.

The cinema of Mark Lewis, to quote from Jennifer Verraes in her study of Lewis’ *Two Impossible Films*, enacts a ‘*praxis* of heritage’ made manifest in the ‘careful reception of legacies’.[19] Such concern for the past openly serves as a source of inspiration for a great number of his films, from *Disgraced Monuments*, the documentary Lewis co-directed with Laura Mulvey on the vandalising and discrediting of Soviet monuments in the aftermath of the collapse of the regime, to his upside down screening of the opening scene of Orson Welles’ *Touch of Evil*, to his revisiting of Michael Powell’s *Peeping Tom*. [20] It is my impression that, throughout Lewis’ filmic career, the reception of legacies follows increasingly elaborate and subtle paths.

In *The Fight*, a case in point, the so-called ‘reception’ process is in effect a reformulation. More importantly, in this instance, the *praxis* of heritage does not raise the question of the artwork as patrimonial object – a question which equally relates to the vandalised Soviet statues as it does to *Peeping Tom* and *Touch of Evil*, which are monuments in their own right. Rather, Lewis’ *praxis* of heritage leads us to reconsider the very notion of patrimonial legacy, by

conceiving the history of aesthetic forms as a perpetual recasting of works whose *patrimonial value needs to be retrieved, beyond and apart from the visual objects which serve as its material support*. In fact, one is to consider any work of art as the site or repository of an aesthetic legacy which can be dissociated from the work expressing it, since it is not just the artistic object in its entirety but equally what I have called its 'plastic formula' which can potentially be transmitted to future generations.

Furthermore, André Gob draws a clear distinction between the material object and the 'actual legacy' which can be transmitted through this object:

The patrimonial wealth of our museums does not just solely reside in objects and monuments of the past. It lies in concepts, ideas, research, aesthetic endeavours, past or present, that are deemed worth preserving or exhibiting. *The conservation of objects which are the material manifestation of this cultural heritage is secondary to the preservation of its immaterial components.*[21]

In terms of museology, what is crucial here is the idea that the remembrance of things past – and the legacy of primitive cinema – can occur in the absence of the patrimonial objects in question (or at a relative distance from them). One should probably rethink or reformulate the notion of the patrimonial object in relation to cinema in order to envisage, alongside objects which are commonly identified as conveyers of filmic heritage, an 'aesthetic legacy' including objects of a very different nature, simultaneously smaller than the film (e.g. a plastic formula) and wider-ranging (since that formula may be shared by a great number of films and even reach beyond the boundaries of the medium). Considering what remains of the 'submerged continent' of early cinema, one must acknowledge the legitimacy of an investigation concerning the ways in which a legacy can be transmitted down generations in the absence of the material objects which are *a priori* essential to this legacy.

The fourth and final example of filmic museology I will now discuss does not refer to an isolated film but rather to a filmmaking project, a cinematographer's entire life, one may even say. A cinema project or rather, as we shall see, a project outside of cinema entirely carried out through the means of cinema. Furthermore, this final example should extend our reflexion on patrimonial legacy and its objects already dealt with in relation to Mark Lewis' film.

Pierre Perrault's cinema and the invention of the ecomuseum

In 1976, Georges-Henri Rivière redefined the ecomuseum as follows:

An ecomuseum is a thing conceived, constructed and run by a government and a population [...] It is a mirror in which people can see themselves, in which they can recognise themselves, look for an understanding of the territory they belong to, as well as of the previous occupants of that same territory, thus outlining the continuity or discontinuity between generations. [...] The ecomuseum is both a natural and a human museum. Man is presented in his natural environment. Nature is presented in its wildness, but also as shaped by traditional and industrial societies which have adapted nature to their own usage. [...] It is a museum of time, since explanations hark back to times before man's first appearance on earth, retrace the prehistoric and historical periods man lived through and finally reach the time of present experience, with an eye to future times. [...] It is a museum of space. Of definite locations, where one may stop. Of linear spaces, along which one may find their way. It is a conservatory, in that it preserves and showcases the cultural and natural heritage of a given population. It is a laboratory, in that it encourages theoretical and practical studies of a population and its environment.[22]

In 1962, more than ten years before Georges-Henri Rivière stated the above, Pierre-Perrault and Michel Brault co-directed the first film in their Îsle-aux-Coudres cycle, *Pour la suite du monde*, of which Perrault later wrote:

One could not say whether *Pour la suite du monde* is actually a film. All that one can say is that it is neither a book nor a symphony... its format being a roll of film [...] I would go as far as saying that I do not make films to make films but to better understand man. [...] All I mean to say is that the camera, for me, is not an end in itself, but a tool like any other. It is man, and it is the man from this place I'm interested in. To this day I've continued exploring the Îsle-aux-Coudres and the Québécois with my tape-recorder ... so as to better understand myself.[23]

As I have just suggested, the intuition I would like to explore is that of a defining relation between Pierre Perrault's filmic project and that of an ecomuseum, Perrault's cinema operating it seems to me as both a conceptual prefiguration and an utmost realisation of the ecomuseum.[24]

Commenting upon the Creusot experiment –whose industrial heritage differs from Georges-Henri Rivière's own conception of the ecomuseum, which veered more towards natural heritage – François Dagognet has pointed out some of the ways in which ecomuseums have revolutionised traditional museology:

So where exactly does the originality of such an institution reside? To start with, the Creusot ecomuseum expands the notion of heritage beyond its known boundaries: old buildings, social housing, atypical 'rental houses', a public wash house, a fireplace, villages and neighbourhoods, and even forests and their natural water sources [...] Even though the museum is erected somewhere within the region, it covers the entire region it is concerned with, effecting an unprecedented and highly desirable turning of the tables. The museum is disseminated through space and so it is no longer up to visitors to enter the museum, since the museum itself has now found its entry into the entire territory. [...] What is more, the population actively participates in this act of 'territorialized memory-making'. [...] Teams are formed [...] who visit individual families and homes in order to establish an inventory of everything that has to do with the village and the past or present professional and domestic activities of its inhabitants through objects, oral lore, photographic albums and housing [...] But here is the decisive turning-point: the exhibition can be ended right after its inauguration. Indeed what would be the use of prolonging an exhibition whose authors, actors and visitors are one and the same? Both subjects and objects, all at once. [25]

Perrault's film *Pour la suite du monde* (*For Those Who Will Follow*[26]) resurrects the ancestral techniques of the beluga hunt by exhuming, in the cinematographer's own words, 'the impeccable and elaborate craft without which the beluga whale would not let itself be caught in the wickerwork of astonishing fishing baskets'.[27] In *Les Voitures d'eau* (*The River Schooners*, 1968), Perrault captures the navigation methods and fabrication secrets of wooden schooners at a time when they were being replaced with iron boats. It is this careful elaboration of the memory of distinct human communities and in particular of lost or near-extinct traditions which Perrault's films have in common with the ecomuseum. In order to construct that memory, Perrault calls upon the communities themselves, whose members are as it happens often present on both sides of the camera, as with the ethnolinguist in *Pays de la terre sans arbres* (*Land Without Trees, or The Mouchouânipi*, 1980), and whose habits, stories, techniques, and objects contribute to the elaboration of an archived heritage.

Whether retrieving ancient ship-building and sailing techniques, exploring ancient hunting techniques of the beluga, of the caribou – the spear versus the shotgun – or of the moose (in *La Bête lumineuse* [*The Shimmering Beast*], 1982) or excavating such ancestral traditions as that of the Native American sweating lodge (in *Land Without Trees*), Perrault considerably expands the notion of heritage, simultaneously endowing it with a non-material dimension. Indeed, the heritage Perrault deals with is as much reliant on habits, tools,

and techniques as on the specific ways in which man relates to the territory. For Perrault, customs and trajectories are as significant as tools and sites.

This immaterial dimension is made all the more vivid due to the fact that this heritage is *created through film* (rather than being solely documented by Perrault) and is extracted from a past which, rather than being accessed through archives, is imagined by those recounting it. The past is thus carefully reinvented by the present of a voice given to telling tales,[28] enacting an 'unceasing resurgence of things past in images of the present', to paraphrase one of the intertitles of *Land Without Trees*. As Michèle Garneau puts it in her notable book on Perrault, the memory which breathes life into the work of the Québécois documentary filmmaker 'does not hark back to the past in an attempt to recover its original texture (following the logic of historical reconstruction) but rather inscribes the past into the present, as if through a powerful magnetic force'.[29]

To my knowledge, Perrault did not take part in any theoretical movement concerning the ecomuseum. His films however seem to me to be pushing to completion the kind of paradox identified by François Dagognet as characteristic of the ecomuseum, that is the fusion between the subjects and the objects of the museum. The inhabitants of the Îsle-aux-Coudres and of other Québécois regions are the actors (that is the creators) of the film *as* ecomuseum. In so far as the film captures their habits as well as their stories, objects, techniques, and culture, these inhabitants are also in some sense a 'living heritage, museumized on the spot'.[30]

Besides, the essential dispersion or dissemination of the site of the ecomuseum finds its accomplishment, and its anticipation, in the work of the documentary filmmaker. Indeed the dissemination of the 'sites and objects of the museum' in different parts of the Québécois territory (including the Mouchouânipi, the Îsle-aux-Coudres, the Abitibi region, the Far North and so on) is reinforced by the dissemination caused by the reproducibility of film. Perrault's ecomuseum, by implying a reinvention *in situ* of the observed heritage, ensures a filmic distribution of a fundamentally dispersed form of the museum.

The examples I have analysed demonstrate the following: in its relation to the museum, cinema generally speaking (both drama and documentary) must no longer be conceived as a mere provider of objects to be exhibited—or 'expôts', to take up André Desvallées' French coinage—but much rather as a medium endowed with the powers of a museum. This new approach to films will bring to light previously undreamt-of forms of curatorial practice

and thus contribute to the redefinition of cinematographic heritage (in particular in its immaterial dimension), to the renewal of museological theory and even to a reinterpretation of the location and space of the museum itself.

Author

Barbara Le Maître is Professor of Film Studies at University Paris Nanterre. She has published *Entre film et photographie. Essai sur l'empreinte* (PUV, 2004), *Zombie, une fable anthropologique* (PUPO, 2015) and co-edited *Preserving and Exhibiting Media Art: Challenges and Perspectives* (AUP, 2013), *Cinéma muséum. Le musée d'après le cinéma* (PUV, 2013), *Tout ce que le ciel permet en cinéma, photographie, peinture et vidéo* (PSN, 2015), *Cinema & Cie. International Film Studies Journal*, Vol. XV, N° 25: «Overlapping Images. Between Cinema and Photography» (Mimesis International, 2016), *La Nuit des morts-vivants. Précis de re-composition* (Bord de l'eau, 2016), and *Muséoscopies. Fictions du musée au cinéma* (PUN, 2018). Her current research deals with cinema and museology, the figure of the living dead, the relations between films and fossils, the film as art historian, and Mark Lewis' films.

References

- Brandi, C. *Theory of restoration*. Firenze: Nardini Editore, 2005 [*Teoria del restauro*, 1963].
- Brenez, N. 'Ken Jacobs ou le parangon de l'analyse visuelle' in *De la figure en général et du corps en particulier*. Bruxelles: De Boeck Université, 1998: 318-322.
- Bordina, A., Estremo, V., and Federici, F (eds). *Extended temporalities: Transient visions in the museum and in art*. Milan: Mimesis International, 2016.
- Burch, N. *Life to those shadows*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.
- Chambat Houillon, M.-F. 'Entre le même et l'autre: la place de l'auteur' in *Cinéma & Cie, International Film Studies Journal*, n°6, Spring 2005: 17-32.
- Dagognet, F. *Le Musée sans fin*. Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 1984.
- Carneau, M. and Villeneuve, J (eds). *Traversées de Pierre Perrault*. Anjou: Fides, 2009.
- Gob, A. 'Le dialogue du musée' in *Vers une redéfinition du muse*, edited by F. Mairesse and A. Desvallées. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007: 21-35.
- Gorgus, N. *Der Zauberer der Vitrinen: zur Museologie Georges Henri Rivières*. Münster: Waxmann, 1999.
- Le Maître, B. and Verraes, J (eds). *Cinéma muséum. Le musée d'après le cinéma*. Saint-Denis: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 2013.
- Mairesse, M. *Le Musée. Temple spectaculaire*. Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 2002.
- Paini, D. *Le Temps exposé. Le cinéma de la salle au musée*. Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 2002.
- Perrault, P. 'Le cycle de l'île aux Coudres' in *Caméramages*. Montréal-Paris: Editions de l'Hexagone/Edilig, 1983: 9-15.
- Poulot, D. *Patrimoine et musées. L'institution de la culture*. Paris: Hachette, 2001.

Vancheri, L. *Cinemas contemporains. Du film à l'installation*. Lyon: Aléas, 2009.

Verraes, J. 'Economies du référent 4. La fausse monnaie. *Two Impossible Films* (Mark Lewis, 1995-1997)' in *Cinema & Cie. International Film Studies Journal*, n° 10. Cinema and Contemporary Visual Arts II, Spring 2008: 51-61.

Notes

- [1] This text is a revised version of a paper I gave at the 11th International Symposium of the *Centre de Recherches sur l'Intermédialité* titled 'Museality and Intermédiality. The New Museum Paradigms', UQUAM & UdeM, Montréal, 28-31 October 2009. I would like to thank Francesco Pitassio for encouraging me to revise the text for publication and for his precious suggestions.
- [2] See for instance Dominique Païni, *Le Temps exposé. Le cinéma de la salle au musée*, Paris, Cahiers du cinéma, 2002; Philippe Dubois (ed.), 'Cinema and Contemporary Visual Arts I', *Cinema & Cie. International Film Studies Journal*, n°8, Milan, Il Castoro, Fall 2006; Tanya Leighton (ed.), *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, London, Afterall/Tate Publishing, 2008; Luc Vancheri (ed.), *Images contemporaines. Arts, formes, dispositifs*, Lyon, Aléas, 2009; Luc Vancheri, *Cinemas contemporains. Du film à l'installation*, Lyon, Aléas, 2009; Philippe Dubois and Jennifer Verraes (eds), 'Cinema and Contemporary Visual Arts III', *Cinema & Cie. International Film Studies Journal*, n°12, Udine/Paris, Carocci & Téraèdre, Spring 2009; Steven Jacobs, *Framing Pictures: Film and the Visual Arts*, Edinburgh University Press, 2011; Raymond Bellour, *La Querelle des dispositifs. Cinéma – installations, expositions*, Paris, P.O.L., 2012; Jacques Aumont, *Que reste-t-il du cinéma?*, Paris, Vrin, 2013; Barbara Le Maître and Jennifer Verraes (eds), *Cinéma museum. Le musée d'après le cinéma*, Saint-Denis, Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 2013; Joséphine Jibokji, Barbara Le Maître, Natacha Pernac, and Jennifer Verraes (eds), *Muséoscopies. Fictions du musée au cinéma*, Presses Universitaires de Nanterre, 2016. Alongside numerous academic publications, a great number of exhibitions and catalogues have dealt with related issues. See for instance: Olivier Asselin (ed.), *L'Effet Cinéma*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 1995; Kerry Brougher and Russell Ferguson (eds), *Art and Film since 1945: Hall of Mirrors*, Museum of Contemporary Art & Monacelli Press, Los Angeles, 1996; Dominique Païni (ed.), *Projections. Les transports de l'image*, Paris, Hazan/Le Fresnoy/AFAA, 1997; Anette Husch, Joachim Jäger, and Gabriele Knapstein (eds), *Beyond Cinema, the Art of Projection: Films, Videos and Installations from 1963 to 2005*, Ostfildern-Ruit, Hatje Cantz, 2006; Philippe-Alain Michaud, *Le Mouvement des images*, Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou, 2006; Marie Fraser, *Explorations narratives/ Replaying narratives*, Montréal, Le Mois de la Photo à Montréal, 2007.
- [3] Drawing on a varied selection of films and photographs and as part of a definition of the notion of contemporaneity (i.e. of contemporary cinema), I began exploring this hypothesis in an article titled 'L'esprit muséal des images contemporaines', *Cinema & Cie. International Film Studies Journal*, n° 8, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-36.
- [4] Mairesse 2002, p. 150.
- [5] 'In its most common definition, heritage is characterized by two main aspects. First, the assimilation of a past which is transformed and re-created through an anachronic metamorphosis of its traces and remnants. Secondly, the acknowledgement that such witnesses of the past are ineluctably distant [...]' Poulot 2001, p. 3.
- [6] Emeric de Lastens, 'Tom par Tom: la copie énigmatique' in *Exploding*, Special Issue (2000), p.57.
- [7] '[...] the original film was lost. It was however preserved as a paper print in Washington and was reprinted towards the end of the 60s by the Brandon Film Company'. See Nicole Brenez, 'L'étude visuelle. Puissance d'une forme cinématographique', *Exploding*, *op. cit.*, p.32. Paper prints played an important role in primitive cinema, firstly as a means of establishing copyright, secondly as archival documents allowing the reproduction of original films when nitrate copies were lost or destroyed. See Kemp R. Niver, *Motion Pictures from the Library of Congress Paper Print Collection – 1894-1912*. Bebe Bergsten (ed.), Berkeley-Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1967.

- [8] Marcel Duchamp's *Boîte-en-valise* (1942) could be mentioned as a precursor of the portable museum. The box was described by its author as follows: 'A box with pull-outs [tires], leather covered (40x40x10 [cm]), containing a faithful reproduction in colour, cut-outs, prints, or scale models of glasses, paintings, watercolours, drawings, ready-mades [...] representative of the major part of Marcel Duchamp's work produced between 1910 and 1937. This deluxe edition is limited to twenty examples numbered I through XX and each are accompanied by a signed original work. The price for each copy is set at 5,000 francs, and will be reduced to 4,000 francs during the subscription period ending on March 1, 1941. apply directly to the author, 11, rue Larrey, Paris (Ve).'The Portable Museums of Marcel Duchamp: de ou par MARCEL DUCHAMP ou RROSE ELAVY, curated by Ronny and Jessy Van de Velde. Introduction by Francis M. Naumann, p. 9 (see also Francis M Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp: The Art of Making Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, New York; London: Harry N. Abrams, 1999). Albeit evocative of a portable museum, the miniaturisation of Duchamp's works and the box itself may just as well remind one of the attaché case of the sales representative displaying his samples – is the *Boîte-en-valise* a museum in miniature or an anticipated representation of its souvenir shop?
- [9] Both quotations are taken from Cesare Brandi's *Theory of Restoration*, translated from the Italian [*Teoria del restauro*, 1963, 1977] by Cynthia Rockwell, Firenze: Nardini Editore, 2005, pp. 40-48 (the emphasis is his).
- [10] In most cases, indeed, restoration neither requires distance from the original nor such use of imitation. A few fundamental questions come up here. For instance, in relation to images, to what extent does restoration need to be considered as the restoration of an object in its *sole* materiality? In fact components of 'lesser materiality' (diegetic referent, narrative development, acting performances and camera movement) also play their part in the film. Besides, one may recall that Van Sant added certain camera movements and shots which Hitchcock had intended but never filmed. Thus one may prefer to interpret Van Sant's gesture as that of a copyist or performer (in the musical sense of the word). But rather than deciding which interpretation works best, what really matters here is to determine what function imitation may serve in restoration. What seems to me to justify talking of Van Sant's imitation as effecting an unusual form of restoration is the predominance of Hitchcock's film as a referent, that is to say the ways in which older filmic elements are made to resurface and coexist with the new – all of which clearly exceeds the common laws of imitation.
- [11] In an insightful analysis of authorship in the context of the remake, Marie-France Chambat Houillon chooses to interpret Van Sant's film as a renovation of Hitchcock's film. See Chambat Houillon 2005.
- [12] 'When the memory of their historical anchors has passed, figurative works become somehow exempt from and *not answerable to their contents*.' Jean-Louis Schefer, *Questions d'art paléolithique*, P. O. L., Paris, 1999, p. 87.
- [13] Jacqueline Nacache, 'Comment penser les remakes américains?' in *Positif*, n° 460, June 1999, pp. 76-80. On this point, see also Chambat Houillon's article cited previously.
- [14] See Clara Schulmann, 'Analyse/Mark Lewis' in *Particules*, n°23, February-March 2009, p. 13.
- [15] For a detailed analysis of the basic features of primitive cinema, including frontality, distance, centrifugality, and the autarchy of the 'primitive tableau with its painted backdrop', see Burch 1990.
- [16] Nicole Brenez identifies the picture as a reproduction of Hogarth's *Southwark Fair*, 1733 (in her article previously cited).
- [17] A typical *Vue Lumière* combines 'a single frame and an uninterrupted recording lasting as long as the reel itself'. See B. Le Maître, 'Exhibiting Film and Reinventing the Painting' in *Preserving and Exhibiting Media Art: Challenges and Perspectives*, J. Noordegraaf, C. Saba, B. Le Maître, and V. He-diger (eds), Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2013, p. 338.
- [18] Although they illustrate two distinct forms of the primitive shot, the *Vue Lumière* and the *tableau* are both in some sense autarkic forms (see Burch 1990).
- [19] See Verrees 2008.

- [20] In chronological succession, see *Disgraced Monuments* (1993), *Upside Down Touch of Evil* (1997), and *Peeping Tom* (2000). Michael Powell's and Orson Welles' own films respectively came out in 1960 and 1958.
- [21] See Gob 2007 (emphasis mine).
- [22] See the official website of the museum: <http://www.ecomusee-creusot-montceau.fr> (accessed on 3 October 2009). For a historical overview of Rivière's museological work, see Gorgus 1999 (translated into French as *Le Magicien des vitrines. Le muséologue Georges-Henri Rivière*, Paris, Editions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2003).
- [23] Perrault 1983.
- [24] One must however point out that in the first half of the 1960s, sociological research conducted in the Aubrac made an important (albeit more traditional) contribution to the ecomuseum project: "The Cooperative Research Programme n°28 (known in France as RCP Aubrac) was launched following a decision by the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) on 1 October 1963. The aim was to study the natural, human and cultural aspects of this region in the centre of France, spanning three departments (Aveyron, Lozère and Cantal). This deliberately interdisciplinary project was presided over by André Leroi-Gourhan, ethnology professor at the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences in Paris and supervised by Georges-Henri Rivière, head curator at the National Museum of Popular Arts and Traditions (MNATP). The programme gave way to extensive team work by researchers from the French Ethnology Centre (CEF-MNATP), the Ethnological Research Centre of the European Sociology Centre (Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes) as well as the Agronomic Research National Institute (INRA) [...]. As part of the survey, paramount importance was given to the so-called "expressive" techniques of photographic, technical drawing, audio recording, cinema [...]. The photographic collection of RCP Aubrac includes some 10 000 photographs. As such, it represents a major documentary and scientific resource, along with the twelve films directed by Jean-Dominique Lajoux." Information retrieved on 18 May 2010 on the following website, which also gives access to the photographic collection of the project:
<http://www.culture.gouv.fr/documentation/phocem/Albums/Aubrac-presentation.pdf>.
- As I intend to show in the following pages, Perrault's films, which were made around the same time as the photographic and filmic images of the Aubrac project, seem to me to fulfill the purpose of an ecomuseum in that they are a filmic reformulation of the upheavals caused by the ecomuseum. To my mind, the Aubrac project did not so much *institute* an ecomuseum *in* and *through* the images it produced as collected a filmic and photographic archive to be preserved alongside other such objects at the Mediterranean and European Civilization Museum. I am grateful to François Mairesse for bringing my attention to the Aubrac project.
- [25] Dagognet 1984, pp. 85-86.
- [26] Also known in English as *Of Whales, the Moon, and Men*, or *The Moontrap*. Perrault's films can be accessed on the National Film Board of Canada website: <https://www.nfb.ca/directors/pierre-perrault/>
- [27] Pierre Perrault, 'Michel Brault, cinéaste' in *Caméramages, op. cit.*, p. 20.
- [28] These fabling modalities have been studied by Vincent Bouchard in an essay titled 'Les dispositifs fabulant dans le cinéma de Pierre Perrault' in *Traversées de Pierre Perrault*, Michèle Garneau and Johanne Villeneuve (eds), Canada, Fides, 2009, pp. 53-68. I wish to thank André Habib for mentioning this work to me.
- [29] Michèle Garneau, 'Ce qui nous rattache au temps: le réveil du passé chez Pierre Perrault et Fernand Dumont' in *Traversées de Pierre Perrault, op. cit.*, p. 119. This idea of a resurgence or projection of the past into the present could just as well be used to describe the work of Van Sant and Lewis as envisaged here. For further analysis of Perrault's work, see also the 25th issue of *Théorème. À grande allure. L'œuvre de Pierre Perrault*, Juliana Araujo and Michel Marie (eds), Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2015.
- [30] The quotation is adapted from a phrase by Liliane Delwasse. See Dagognet 1984, p. 173.