

THE SPREADABILITY OF VIDEO

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In the fall of 2013, the Centre Pompidou in Paris held an exhibition eponymously entitled *Pierre Huyghe*.¹ Although the exhibition was conceived as a mid-career retrospective of Pierre Huyghe's artistic production, it took the form of an ecosystem—a living environment that evolved according to the performance and media experiments that took place throughout the duration of the show. These transformations were reinforced by the exhibition design. Installed in the small space of the South Gallery, more than fifty artworks dating from the 1980s to 2013 were presented in such proximity to and juxtaposition with each other that their distinctiveness was easily disrupted when perceived by viewers. The sound components of the video and performance works continuously overlapped, effectively contaminating each other. When entering the gallery, viewers were randomly exposed to at least three intersecting sounds: the voice of the announcer declaring the names of the incoming visitors (*Name Announcer*, 2011); a sound extract from a 1988 discussion about Duchamp at the Institut des hautes études en arts plastiques; and the voice of Kate Bush while she is signing *Wuthering Heights*—from the soundtrack of *The Host and the Cloud* (2010) (fig. 12.4)—emerging from the back of the gallery. As they walked deeper into the space, the viewers were exposed to the layering of a variety of video sound tracks, including Lucie Dolène (the voice of Disney's French version of Snow White) humming "Someday My Prince Will Come" from *Blanche-Neige Lucie* (1997) and the buzzing bees from *A Way in Untilled* (2012). The permeability of the works' boundaries was facilitated by the curatorial and artistic decision to build the exhibition from the partitions left behind by the previous exhibition, a Mike Kelley



FIGURE 12.1

Pierre Huyghe, *Atari Light*, 1999 (computer game program, interface, two joysticks, halogen lamps, ceiling construction), and *L'Expédition Scintillante, Acte 3: Untitled (Black Ice Stage)*, 2002 (black ice rink, female skater, programme; Music: *Music for Airports # 4* by Brian Eno [1978], 13¾ × 403⅞ × 304¾ inches [35 × 1024 × 774 cm]). Installation view: *Pierre Huyghe*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (September 25, 2013–January 6, 2014). Courtesy of the artist and Esther Schipper Gallery, Berlin. Photograph © Andrea Rossetti.

retrospective. This setup, which had only one closed soundproof room, was explored not only to maximize the circulation of sound throughout the exhibition space but also to give spectators the possibility of seeing images from different artworks *at the same time*, thereby creating new image combinations. The spectators' interpretation of individual artworks was consequently discouraged in favor of their exposure to the aural and visual mixing of images.

This chapter examines the pivotal role of video in *Pierre Huyghe's* unique redefinition of the retrospective format, with the understanding that video here is mostly combined with 16mm or 35mm film, usually transferred to digital beta, or consists entirely of a digital beta work. It asks how, in the age of the digital mixing of media, the vanishing of video as a specific medium can be explored to rethink the aesthetic function of the image. How does this vanishing affect spectatorship and the exhibition format? Can this vanishing be understood as a form of abstraction? How and why does video still matter? My main claim is that the innovativeness of current video art (or at least one of its main fields of innovativeness) lies in the exploration of the *spreadability* of its

images and sounds in the gallery space, even beyond the spaces constructed to contain them. Media scholar Henry Jenkins has recently used this term to define the technical and cultural potential of the emerging media landscape—a digital mediascape that favors the circulation of content more than its distribution—in which audiences are encouraged to share and reframe media content.² By spreadability, however, I refer not so much to the ways in which participatory cultures are emerging from the sharing of media content as to the ways in which the digital mediascape technically and culturally encourages the circulation of sound-images. In *Pierre Huyghe*, that circulation is certainly technically and culturally conditioned by the evolution of new media, but its modality and impact are not tied to the participatory ethos. Spreadability consists here in the circulation of sound-images *in space*. The effect of that circulation is to create porous, intensified situations.

The Pompidou retrospective was a pivotal mobilizer of this type of investigation—one that not only problematized the conventional view of the retrospective exhibition as a coexistence of discrete artworks organized chronologically but one that also dethroned the hierarchical position of the spectator in relation to the artworks. Exploring Manuel De Landa's Deleuzian notion of intensity as the process by which things individuate *differentially* (by which things become different as they interact), this chapter argues that in the retrospective the spreadability of video images and video sounds abstracted the exhibition space by turning it into an evolving situation. It showed abstraction to be not simply the abandonment of representational or figurative imagery, nor what art historian Lucian Krukowski has identified as the nonobjective route of abstraction: "the disengagement from both the mimetic and analytic responses to natural objects in favor of inventions in which the visual elements are conceived on linguistic or notational models."³ My hypothesis is the following: as video sound-images spread through space and spread space, they abstract the exhibition space by making its unperceivable intensities manifest. In that process, the exhibition space is requalified as a situation, an ecosystem, or something like a garden (terms I will be using from now on). In *Pierre Huyghe*, video representation persists, but its mimetic, indexical and analytic functions are significantly marginalized. The video sound-images are produced and experienced by viewers as fictions, narratives, and documents—and they are surely interpreted. But their main function rests elsewhere. They spread. They are not so much abstract in themselves. Rather, they have abstracting effects. Their spreadability abstracts the environment in which video keeps evolving. Spectators are exposed to that abstraction: they don't control it; they are part of it.

The objective of this chapter is to understand this abstractive mechanism. To do so, it starts by briefly situating video in relation to the emerging digital mediascape, positing that video has lost its medium specificity but that it still persists aesthetically. It then investigates Huyghe's evolving video practice in relation to that change. My investigation mainly proceeds by contrasting *The Third Memory* (1999)—one of the pivotal video installations that established the artist as a major figure of video art in

the late 1990s and early 2000s (an installation shown at the Centre Pompidou at the same time as, but separately, from the retrospective)—with the *Pierre Huyghe* retrospective. Finally, it analyzes the spreadability function put into play in the retrospective by situating the Pompidou show within the speculative turn in the humanities and social sciences (a turn invested in the thinking of potentiality) from which the abstraction effects of video—explored as an intensification practice—can be better explained and comprehended.

AFTER THE THIRD MEMORY

The becoming digital of video happened rather quickly if we compare video to film and photography, whose analog lives were long enough to establish them as true institutions. Media theoretician Philippe Dubois has splendidly analyzed this state of affairs. As Dubois maintains, video art has only occupied a fragile, transitory and intermediary position between two moving image technologies: analog film and digital imagery (to which we should add a third non-moving-image technology, photography).⁴ Video art has always been at the threshold of the before and the after, the "too soon" and the "too late," with not much time between these two extremes. Its history as an analog medium is about forty years old and began with the availability of the first portable recording systems in the late 1960s. But from its beginnings, analog video was fundamentally proto-digital insofar as artists used a variety of electronic tools to transform the electronic signal—adding synthetic colors; mixing images; creating holes in the image to fill them with other images (keying); sequencing images to create effects of image superimposition, juxtaposition, and dissolution; disrupting image and sound synchronization. They abstracted the image-sounds of television. The electronic tools also enabled the circulation of images within the screen and from one screen to the other, inside but also beyond the gallery space. These transformations were invented before the full array of digital image-manipulation. If video persists today, it is precisely because its aesthetics has influenced and continues to fit the image-circulation potential of the emerging mediascape.

However, although video persists in some form or another, the history of the moving image unfolds now "after video." By this, I do not mean that we are in a post-video moment but that we are "after" video in the same sense that art historian David Joselit speaks of "after art." For Joselit, "after art" signifies that the notion of the medium (even of the post-medium) has ceased to be a productive analytical tool to understand artistic practices. The idea of the medium presupposes that the art object is a distinct, relatively stable, and localizable object. It denies the fact that since the 1990s, digital technologies have become predominant in their capacity to convert all work (sound, image, or text) in a digital sequence.⁵ These technologies activate the reproduction, reframing, and circulation of images. They allow for the spreading of sounds and images. Hence, it is not that we are living the end of art or the end of video art, but that sound-images

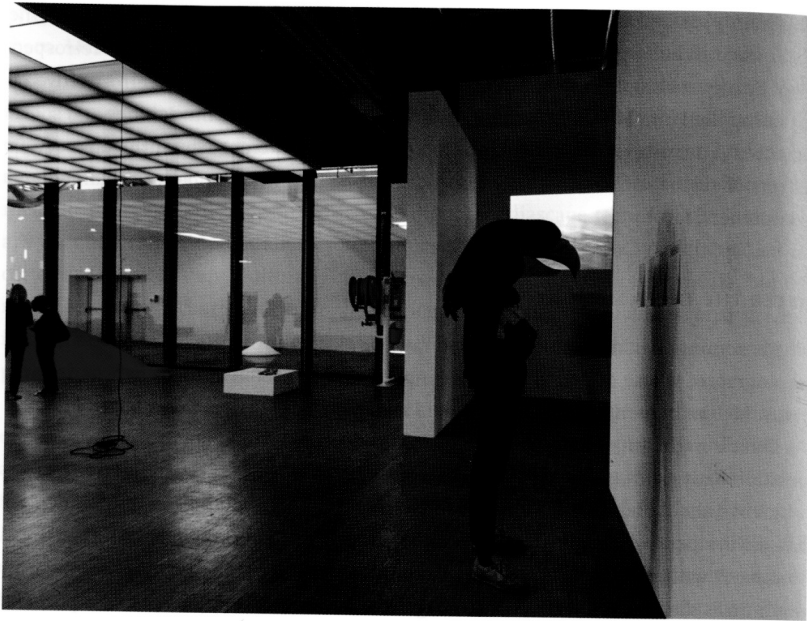


FIGURE 12.2

Pierre Huyghe, *Atari Light*, 1999 (computer game program, interface, two joysticks, halogen lamps, ceiling construction), and *La Toison d'Or*, 1993/1999 (performer with mask from original event, Jardin de l'Arquebuse, Dijon, France, April 16, 1993). Installation view: *Pierre Huyghe*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (September 25, 2013–January 6, 2014). Courtesy of Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, and Esther Schipper Gallery, Berlin. Photograph by Philippe Migeat, Centre Pompidou, Paris.

in general and notably those explored by artists persist only through their capacity, just about inexhaustible in the digital age, for reproduction, remediation, proliferation and circulation.⁶ Interestingly, regarding the point I am trying to make here about the spreadability of video in Huyghe's practice, Joselit sees Huyghe's videos of the 1990s and 2000s as highly representative of the "after," emphasizing how his works function not as mediums but as "reformatting processes" (a term used by Huyghe) whereby a video, for example, can become a celebration, and an amusement park can become a garden. "After video" corresponds to a unique moment in the history of media. For the sake of clarity, it is useful to characterize that moment by referring to its three main aesthetic operations: the ending of video art as a distinct (medium tape-based) practice; its spreadability; and the persistence of the main aesthetic constituent of video art: temporal exploration (let us simply recall here Nam June Paik's famous statement: "In video there is no space [no delimited frame] there is only time [lines with no thickness]. . . . Video is essentially time.")⁷ In light of this last feature, it is imperative to emphasize that

time has consistently been a deep concern for Huyghe, at least since his founding in 1995 of l'Association des temps libérés (The Association of Freed Time), an association to "develop unproductive time, for a reflection on free time, and to cultivate a society without work."⁸

Huyghe is primarily known for his video installation remakes, retakes, and reruns (notably, *Blanche-Neige Lucie* [1997], *L'Ellipse* [1998], *No Ghost Just a Shell* [1999–2003], and *The Third Memory* [1999]) that stage individuals reappropriating their voice over their stolen, neglected, or fictionalized life stories. These works recirculate modified versions of film narratives constitutive of the history of cinema. In *L'Ellipse*, for example, the actor Bruno Ganz was invited to replay his role in Wim Wenders's *The American Friend* (1977) by walking in real time the distance between two scenes originally connected by a jump cut: a moment of wandering and introspection through Paris—the manifestation par excellence of unproductive time. In *Blanche-Neige Lucie*, Lucie Dolène hums the Snow White song in an empty studio while subtitles reveal that she sued and won her case against Disney Voice Characters to gain the copyright to her interpretation. *The Third Memory*—one of Huyghe's best known video works—was presented during the *Pierre Huyghe* retrospective but was shown separately on the fourth floor of the Centre Pompidou, in the permanent collection galleries. Accessible, but to be looked at independently, its presentation there highlighted the important shift in Huyghe's video production. *The Third Memory* is a video installation. That format was made clear in its isolated display. It revolves around Sydney Lumet's film *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975), whose script was based on a famous hold-up of a bank held by John Wojtowicz in Brooklyn in 1972. Huyghe invited Wojtowicz (by then out of prison) to play his role as the main actor of the story—a role played by Al Pacino in Lumet's film. More than twenty-five years after being dispossessed of his story by media (not only by film but also television), Wojtowicz reconstitutes the event with other actors. As video curator Christine Van Assche stipulates, in *The Third Memory* Wojtowicz "becomes the hero again" as "he reactivates every day, at each instant, the memory of this news item and gives it a central place in the story of his life."⁹ The two sections of the work are installed in two adjacent rooms: the first room presenting newspaper articles and archived audiovisual documents of the event, and the second room presenting a two-channel video projection juxtaposing images from the reconstitution with footage from *Dog Day Afternoon*. The juxtaposition discloses how much Wojtowicz's memory has been influenced and altered by the film. The reconstitution produces a story that is not entirely his. Fiction and reality bleed into each other.

In the retrospective, there is a sense that for Huyghe the remakes, retakes, and reruns structuring his previous videos were not enough anymore to guarantee the recirculation of images, even the reconstitution of fictional/factual life stories. Referring to his current work, Huyghe states that "I am interested in the vitality of the image, in the ways in which an idea or an artefact leaks in a biological or mineral reality. . . . I am interested in things and operations in themselves, contingency, the creation of form which cannot

be exhausted by the sedimentation of discourse. . . . I'm trying not to define the relation between the subjects but only to set the early conditions for potential porosity."¹⁰ This vitality is inseparable from the notion of unproductive time sustaining the Association of Freed Time—a temporality that becomes effective in long duration and in the absence of control: not only the time it takes to allow for the contingency of the human/nonhuman interactions to take place but the actual dynamism of these interactions. Vitality lies more precisely in the production of porous situations whose occurrence and fate are never secure. At least since the garden he made for *dOCUMENTA (13)* in 2012, Huyghe's artistic intervention consists predominantly of a Duchampian act of selection: he selects elements (video images, living organisms) most likely to interact so as to augment the situations' capacity for porosity.

As stipulated in my introductory remarks, my claim is that video is a major player in that vitalist, situational dynamism. In the *Pierre Huyghe* retrospective, the remake/retake/rerun functions of video (operations that support the recirculation of images and the reappropriation of rights related to expression and interpretation) have been reoriented to act biologically. Video is now projected to lose in media specificity: it is nearly dissolvable and thus spreadable. Video images and video sounds spread in space as they spread the space: in so doing, they do not merely circulate but gain in permeability and interactiveness. As Emma Lavigne, the curator of the Pompidou show, specifies, the prerequisite for that type of spreadability is to break the "*dispositif*"—the apparatus—of the installation format; it is both to reformat video installations into situations and to discontinue the art milieu's medium-guided perception of Huyghe as a *video* artist mostly dedicated to the critique of the history of *cinema*.¹¹ For Lavigne, a key example of that break was in the renewed display of the video *Streamside Day* (2003). Normally projected on a wall in a large (10 × 8 m) enclosed room with a tree in its box installed nearby, it was reformatted for the retrospective into a smaller wall projection. The video documents Huyghe's invention of a ritual that celebrates the birth of a community in Streamside Knolls in New York's Hudson Valley. The inhabitants at the time did not know each other because they had just moved into the new housing development. They all wanted to preserve something of the natural environment surrounding the estate. The nature and culture celebration took the form of a ceremony held on October 11, 2003. It included a parade of members of the community led by a flute player, as well as speeches, a meal, and a show, with children disguised as animals making cardboard houses; domesticated animals circulated freely. The video is mainly about the capacity of inhabitants to build rituals (rituals that can be repeated accordingly) and the consolidation of communities by rituals. In the Pompidou retrospective, *Streamside Day* was projected on the wall of an open corridor and its scale was significantly reduced to a format that recalled an 8mm family movie setting, to be watched by family or community members. In this setting, the intimacy provided by the scale of the image was expanded (spread, as it were) to include any passerby in the exposed, public space. In this setting, *Streamside Day* ceased to be the re-creation of a site (an installation) and

became a celebration potential (a situation)—the potential for any visitor to set up his or her own ritual.

Philosopher Giorgio Agamben, expanding on Foucault's discussion of the term, has defined the "*dispositif*" (*dispositivo*) as "anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings."¹² This includes prisons, mental health facilities, and factories, but also the pen, computers, and language itself. For Agamben, apparatuses constitute us as subjects but in so doing they desubjectify us. Even if one doesn't agree with the austerity of his assessment, it is interesting to point out that he sees *profanation*—"the restitution to common use" or "the free use"—as a means to reduce the desubjectifying effects of apparatuses.¹³ Huyghe's breaking of the *dispositif* through the reformatting and spreading of video must be understood as a form of profanation: it frees, restores, publicizes, and vitalizes images and sounds by augmenting their potential to interact with other images and sounds, transforming them both semantically and materially in that very process.

INTENSITY

The spreadability of video as a practice of abstraction is mobilized by a speculative approach to art. In many recent interviews, Huyghe has stated and restated his interest in that turn, especially in intensity, one of the pivotal concepts of speculative realism. Speculative realism is a response to the limits of Kantian and post-Kantian antirealism, which affirms that reality ("all that exists") is fundamentally mental—a "variation of mind or spirit."¹⁴ Antirealism (which is in fact a form of idealism) is grounded in what philosopher Quentin Meillassoux terms *correlationism*: "the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other."¹⁵ Such an ontological stance, in its numerous variations, holds that humans can never access, know, or speak about the world as a realm independent of thought or language. The world, reality, and the existence of reality are mind dependent. The origins of correlationism (which speculative realism seeks to oppose) lie in Immanuel Kant's critical philosophy—a philosophy that rejected the possibility of knowing a noumenal realm beyond the human mind. In such a philosophy, objects conform to the mind; human knowledge of the perceived world is structured and made possible by mental a priori categories and forms of intuition. That correlationist tradition persists in any philosophy or artistic practice—including phenomenology, neo-Marxism, deconstruction, postmodernism, criticality, relational aesthetics and participatory art—whose ontology affirms that consciousness, ideas, power, discourse, text, representation, or culture constitutes reality. In speculative philosophies and artistic practices, the purpose is to reflect not so much upon *what is* as *what can be*—a realm accessible through speculation. Speculative realist philosophies (which are realist philosophies) maintain that the antirealist (correlationist) stance has reached

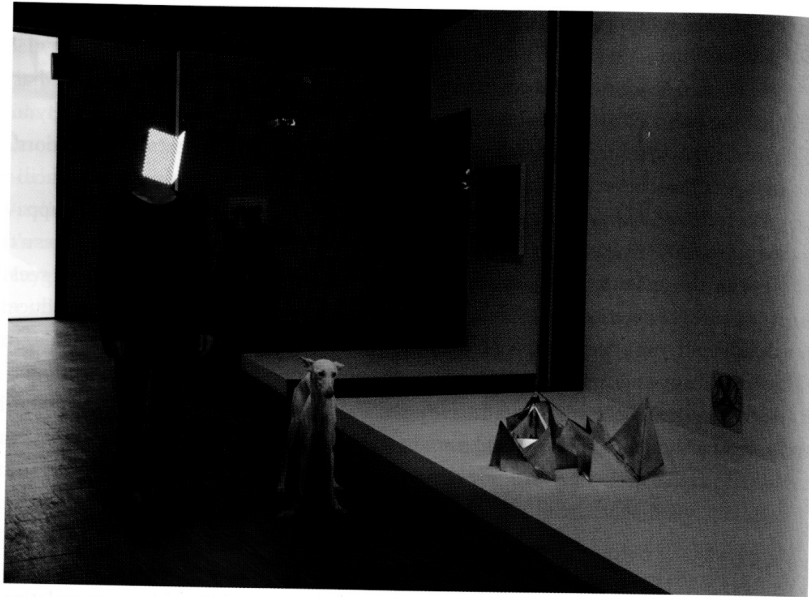


FIGURE 12.3

Pierre Huyghe, *Player*, 2010 (LED, brass, hand controller, mask; 15 × 16 × 24 cm), and *Human*, 2010 (Ibizan hound) from *Untilled*, 2012. Installation view: *Pierre Huyghe*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (September 25, 2013–January 6, 2014). Courtesy of Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, and Esther Schipper Gallery, Berlin. Photograph by Philippe Migeat, Centre Pompidou, Paris.

its limits insofar as it prevents not only philosophy but the humanities and social sciences from assessing and understanding some of the major developments in recent history, including globalization, technological growth and expansion, environmental deterioration, as well the reiterated exclusion of certain categories of being from the realm of existence. “In the face of the looming ecological catastrophe, and the increasing infiltration of technology into the everyday world (including our own bodies),” argue the authors of *The Speculative Turn*, the guidebook in this field of study, “it is not clear that the anti-realist position is equipped to face up to these developments.”¹⁶ *Pierre Huyghe* is a speculative exhibition in that specific sense: its ecosystem is one that provides mind-independent autonomy to the show. The components of the retrospective are selected (a selection that includes spreading videos and performances as well as many organic components susceptible to interacting with the other components of the ecosystem). The exhibition is thereon largely left to itself: it is of course framed by the rules of the institution but transformations are always at play, resulting from the interactions of the components of the exhibition.

Speculatively speaking, the interactions between its components—interactions

I claim to be facilitated by the spreadability of video—intensify the exhibition. That spreadability shows the exhibition to be a situation or an ecosystem composed of intensive properties. I will be using the term *intensive* in its Deleuzian formulation, but I will mostly rely on Manuel De Landa’s explanation of it. The intensive properties of an organism or ecosystem cannot be defined without referring to “multiplicity,” one of the central concepts of Deleuze’s realism (one that assumes the autonomy of material entities from the human mind). *Multiplicity* is the very term by which Deleuze discards the entities sustaining naïve realism, including the perception that “the world is composed of fully formed objects whose identity is guaranteed by their possession of an *essence*, a core set of properties that defines what these objects are.”¹⁷ The intensive (a term taken from thermodynamics but extended by Deleuze to other fields) partakes of multiplicity insofar as it defines processes of individuation as occurring not only progressively but also dynamically, through processes of divergent differentiation. The intensive can be contrasted but not opposed to the extensive.

Let us return to the Pompidou exhibition to explain that distinction. The retrospective is made of observable extensive properties, that is, of areas and volumes, as well as lengths between entities. It is metric space. These are inherently divisible: if we were to divide the space into two equal halves, we would end up with two volumes. The intensive properties of a system are properties, such as temperature or pressure, that cannot be so easily observed or divided, that cannot be divided without changing that system in kind—as De Landa explains, “If we take a volume of water at 90 degrees of temperature, for instance, and break it up into two equal parts, we do not end up with two volumes at 45 degrees each, but with two volumes at the original temperature.”¹⁸ It is notable that most entities in the Pompidou exhibition cannot be easily divided in equal parts because of their permeable, spreading, moving, sometimes climate-sensitive boundaries. The exhibition promotes these properties: this is where its vitality lies. Huyghe’s description of the Pompidou exhibition supports that view. In an interview with Julia Michalska, he states:

I want to make the works porous so that they can corrupt one another. This could be through sound, light, something biological, the movement of an animal. . . . it’s undetermined, uncontrollable. . . . Vitality means the intensity of being alive. I’m interested in how to quantify the different variations of being alive . . . how to intensify the presence of things. I look at how things change, are transformed, or metabolize. The word might not be perfectly appropriate and I might change it. But I am trying to find a word to say “something that is alive.” I mean the intensity of life within one entity. . . . I want to see a transformation. Even death is a transformation. It is the end for one entity, but it means food and minerals for something else. This never stops.¹⁹

Notice how Huyghe defines the act of intensification as a random activity of corruption of one work on another and how he equates vitality with the intensity of “being

alive,” which in turn is equated with the potential of being transformed. His approach to intensity is fundamentally Deleuzian insofar as it refers to the behavior of components that interact and become different as they interact. The artistic challenge mapped out in the interview is one of enabling intensities, which are paradoxically contingent and unperceivable. Deleuze’s most important theses regarding the intensive recognize this paradox. They are twofold: (1) the intensive generates the extensive (the metric space organisms inhabit emerges from a nonmetric continuum through a flow of broken symmetries), and (2) once individuation is reached, the intensive properties that conditioned the individuation process disappear or are concealed beneath the extensive properties of the finalized individual.²⁰ Deleuze’s philosophical project is to overcome the “objective illusion” generated by that concealment, to make the intensive properties manifest. The video intensification of the exhibition space—the video-facilitated manifestation of the abstraction of the exhibition’s situation—can be seen as a specific speculative-realist redefinition of art as a stable object. It breaks with correlationism by favoring and allowing the components of the exhibition to influence and affect each other.

A CLOSER LOOK INTO THE POMPIDOU RETROSPECTIVE

Now let us look at the exhibition more attentively. Let us see how video spreads and how it spreads the space to abstract it. The show is installed in the remains of the previous Mike Kelley retrospective, with some alterations, which were kept to a minimum.²¹ Some partition walls were cut to receive other works, such as *L’Expédition Scintillante, Acte 3: Untitled (Black Ice Stage; 2002)* (fig. 12.1), so that the corner of the ice rink may expand into another room—here again, a spreading aesthetics. The video *This is not a Time for Dreaming* (2004/2009) was projected behind a partition wall. And the exhibition integrated a section of the exterior courtyard to extend the exhibition space, enclosing it with a transparent wall to protect a microclimate for the bees of *Untilled’s* beehive and the climate modification device made of snow transforming itself into rain and fog of *L’Expédition Scintillante, Acte 1: Untitled (Weather Score; 2002)*. An archaeological hole in one of the walls (*Timekeeper, 1999*) showed different layers of plaster and paint from previous exhibitions.

The idea of an ecosystem serves as a template for the juxtaposition of the works. The exhibition begins with an opening procedure, *Name Announcer* (2011), which not only introduces but also exposes the visitors one by one to the other beings in the gallery. The fact that they are named and exposed highlights another fact: visitors are not given any specific function; they are recognized more as individuals than as spectators. Huyghe says, “In that space there are other people, and this is important for me. When you are announced you are exposed—and not so much in an interactive way. You are not requested to do something. You are asked your name and that is all. You don’t need to play or behave.”²² That announcement is crucial insofar as it disrupts the spectator-art correlationism: viewers are exposed to art and not art exposed for viewers.



FIGURE 12.4

Pierre Huyghe, *De Hory Modigliani*, 2007 (oil on canvas); *The Host and the Cloud*, 2010 (HD video, color, sound; 121 minutes, 30 seconds); *RSI, au bout du réel*, 2006 (neon); and *Zoodram 4*, 2011 (live marine ecosystem, resin mask after Constantin Brancusi’s *Sleeping Muse* [1910]). Installation view: Pierre Huyghe, Centre Pompidou, Paris (September 25, 2013–January 6, 2014). Courtesy of Marian Goodman Gallery, New York and Esther Schipper Gallery, Berlin. Photograph by Philippe Migeat, Centre Pompidou, Paris.

The video works (comprising film/videos, 16mm/35mm films transferred to digital beta, and digital beta works) include *Blanche-Neige Lucie* (1997), *Two Minutes Out of Time* (2000), *One Million Kingdoms* (2001), *Streamside Day* (2003), *This is not a Time for Dreaming* (2004/2009), *A Journey That Wasn’t* (2005), *Forest of Lines* (2008), *The Host and the Cloud* (2010), and *A Way in Untilled* (2012). Most of the other works in the show are related to performance—human performances, documents of performances and events, traces of performances or simply animal life—including spectators playing a videogame (*Atari Light, 1999*) (figs. 12.1 and 12.2); the skater skating in *L’Expédition Scintillante, Acte 3: Untitled [Black Ice Stage]*, 2002 (fig. 12.1); the LED-masked walker (*Player, 2010*) (fig. 12.3); the walker wearing an animal head (*La Toison d’Or, 1993*) (fig. 12.2); the fuchsia-legged Ibiza hound named *Human* from *Untilled* (2012) (fig. 12.3); the bees of the beehive covering the head of *Untilled’s* reclining nude (*Untilled [Liegender Frauenakt]*, 2012); invertebrates evolving in the *Zoodram 2* (2010) aquarium; the hermit crab’s adoption of a reproduction of Brancusi’s *Muse endormie* (1910) as a shelter

in *Zoodram 4* (2011) (fig. 12.4); live corner spiders (*C. C. Spider*, 2011); live ants and spiders circulating freely, creating lines from nest to nest located in small holes in the walls (*Umwelt*, 2011); a real fake Modigliani (*De Hory Modigliani*, 2007) (fig. 12.4); posters of *Casting* (1995), *Or* (1995), *L'Écrivain public* (1995), *One Year Celebration* (2003–2006), and *Stars* (2008); a sanded wall exposing a layer of green paint remaining from the presentation of Guy De Cointet's *Tell Me* during the 2013 edition of the Nouveau Festival, evoking Monet's last *Nymphéas*, whose green and white powder had fallen and was spread on the floor by walking visitors (*Shore*, 2013).

The works populating *Pierre Huyghe* compose the metric (extensively defined) space of the exhibition. Yet they emerge from a nonmetric continuum that is not directly perceivable. That continuum unfolds when works start to interact with each other and are transformed in these interrelations. The works were selected and placed to enable the nondissimulation of the intensive properties of the exhibition as a whole. The spreadability of video is pivotal to that intensification (as well as the exhibition layout, which favors the easy circulation of sound and images). Sound tracks are continuously overlapping, combining, and contaminating each other. The display of the works offers visitors numerous occasions to hold in their field of vision a multiplicity of coexisting images perceptually impacting each other because of the movement of the moving images. Looking at *The Host and the Cloud* necessarily leads to the inclusion—within the viewer's visual field—of the fake Modigliani painting hanging close by: the proximity of the two pieces creates a porosity between real and fiction, modern and contemporary muses; it turns the Modigliani female sitter into a character of *The Host and the Cloud*. The viewing of *A Journey That Wasn't*—a documentary/science-fiction video on Huyghe's expedition to the Antarctic in search of an albino creature—is aurally and visually conditioned by the sound of Erik Satie's *Gymnopédies 3 and 4* and the pulsing lights and fog emanating from *L'Expédition Scintillante, Acte 2: Untitled (Light Box)* (2002) installed in the same room. *A Journey*, in turn, imaginatively transports the universe of the light box into the icy continent.

When visitors play *Atari Light*—a video game with joysticks and halogen lamps inserted in a large (960 × 960 cm) overhead grid—the lamps light up in the grid, square by square, creating a flickering effect that spreads over the works installed nearby, a spread that intensifies the spectacle dimension of the golden tap shoes on a scuffed pedestal from *Singing in the Rain* (1996) and the free time declaration of the plant and poster from *Le Procès du temps libre* (1999). During the show, *RSI, un bout de réel* (2006) (fig. 12.4), a neon structure fixed to the ceiling—a 7 × 7 m Borromean knot, created from an unfinished drawing by Jacques Lacan representing the interdependency of the real, the symbolic, and the imaginary—shines at 10 percent of its intensity, but when it appears in the *The Host and the Cloud* just below, it illuminates the whole exhibition. Around November, the soundtrack of the buzzing bees from *A Way in Untitled* was programmed to pollinize for a few seconds all the speakers in the room. This meant that, at any time afterward, listeners in the gallery experiencing a work could suddenly be exposed to the buzz—a

contamination that changes, for a while at least, both the materiality and the contemplation of that work. The *Player* walker, whose face is covered with a LED mask in the shape of an open book, regularly circulates in the room, although his or her presence (like that of all the performers) is never guaranteed or pre-announced. Video—more precisely the video screen turned into a mask—is thus spreading in space through a walking human figure. The oscillating identity of the player—she or he is simultaneously a visitor, a viewer, a science fiction reader, and a wanderer, someone whose seeing is augmented by the screen or perhaps partially blinded by it—continuously raises questions about the spectator's perceptual activity: What is it to perceive in a world of screens? What and how do we see through our screens, which are now literally part of our bodies? Do we have a better view of the unperceived? Do we have a better sense of the intensive properties of our surroundings? Has the world become more abstract?

The point of my argument is that the release of intensities does abstract the space insofar as intensities are the properties of the nonmetric space from which the metric space of the exhibition emerges, stabilizes, and restabilizes. This abstraction is not directly perceived, but the viewers experience its interactions, and they will perceive—are exposed to—some of the traces of intensification. Intensification has occurred and is still occurring; it might continue to occur in the future. The spreadability of video has activated that abstraction. Visitors might not directly perceive intensive properties as they emerge, but they become witnesses to their occurrences. When referring to the assemblage of his work in the Pompidou retrospective, Huyghe has used different terms to qualify its dynamic nature, from *cohabitation* to *heterogeneity* to *encounter* and *reorganization*, as well as *mutual corruption*. “I like the idea that things can cohabitate, but maintain their heterogeneity,” said Huyghe. “They can be separated or reorganized. How do they relate or not relate? I am interested in this question, and in questioning the conditions of encounter.”²³ This variation is eloquent insofar as the works in the retrospective do not all necessarily relate to and affect each other. Perceptually experienced interactions do not necessarily alter the viewer's perception of the works. And some organic components (bees and ants, for instance) die—a fate that shows how some cohabitations are better for survival than others.

However, this being said, the spreadability of video was activated to intensify the environment. Video became an object of influence more than a transmitter of sounds and images: it was explored as a means to trigger interrelations that could modify the visitor's perception of the works assembled in the retrospective. In 2011, Huyghe produced a work entitled *Influenced*. Although not part of the Pompidou retrospective, its modus operandi sustained the spreadability function of video reinforced in the show. It consisted of a person present in a gallery space carrying a flu virus. This person—a gallery attendant and not someone acting as an attendant—was chosen either because she or he already had the flu or had accepted to be injected with the virus through a flu shot. Visitors could find a checklist describing the situation and decide to stay or not to stay in the space. But they—like anyone circulating in any public space—had nevertheless

been exposed to an infectious organism. They were under influence despite themselves. Such are intensive properties: they influence the becoming other of things as they individuate. Influence also structured the 2010 *The Host and the Cloud* event held in the abandoned Musée national des arts et traditions populaires in Paris on three celebration days (Halloween, Valentine's Day, and May Day). The video made from that event was one of the strongest presences of the Pompidou exhibition, in terms of both size (the projection was the largest of the show) and sound (the Kate Bush song, part of its sound track, could be heard throughout the gallery). Huyghe asked fifteen actors to take up the position of the museum's personnel and participate in sessions of magic, hypnosis, exorcism, psychodrama, and sleeping-pill ingestions, which would affect the actors' states of consciousness. Fifty people were invited to witness these live experiments.²⁴ In *Influenced* and *The Host and the Cloud*, abstraction—the manifestation of the intensive properties of a situation—was primarily activated by (influenced and influencing) humans circulating in space. In the Pompidou exhibition, it was the spreadability of a nonhuman thing—video—that became one of the central influencing factors enabling the abstraction of space—that is, its intensification.

NOTES

1. The show was held at the Centre Pompidou in Paris from September 25, 2013, to January 6, 2014. Emma Lavigne curated the show, with the assistance of Florencia Chernajovsky.
2. Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2013), 1–3.
3. Lucian Krukowski, "Abstraction," in *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, ed. Michael Kelly (London: Oxford University Press, 1998), www.oxfordreference.com.proxy1.library.mcgill.ca/view/10.1093/acref/9780195113075.001.0001/acref-9780195113075-e-0003?rskey=iq5fAK&result=3.
4. Philippe Dubois, "La question vidéo face au cinéma: Déplacements esthétiques," in *Cinéma et dernières technologies*, ed. Frank Beau, Philippe Dubois, and Gérard Blanc (Paris: INA; Brussels: De Boeck Université, 1998); and *La Question vidéo: entre cinéma et art contemporain* (Crisnée, Belgium: Yellow Now, 2011), 77 and 99.
5. David Joselit, *After Art* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), 2.
6. Joselit, *After Art*, xv.
7. Nam June Paik, "L'Arche de Nam June," *art press* 47 (April 1981), 7–9. My translation.
8. Centre Pompidou, Direction des publics, Service de l'information des publics et de la médiation, "Pierre Huyghe, 25 September 2013–6 January 2014," press information, www.centrepompidou.fr/media/imp/M5050/CPV/ba/d5/M5050-CPV-25145cad-29bb-4565-bad5-e68d7f5be6ec.pdf.
9. Christine Van Assche, "The Third Memory," Point of View: Extrait du catalogue *Collection art contemporain—La collection du Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne*, sous la direction de Sophie Duplaix, Paris, Centre Pompidou, 2007. Centre Pompidou virtuel, www.centrepompidou.fr/cpv/ressource.action?param.id=FR_R-1425bb6a5c5ffddcc2ffb89cf4bea055¶m.idSource=FR_O-fd7d0bcefd1bc7879ee8adod82e17d. My translation.

10. Pierre Huyghe, quoted in Sky Goodden, "Pierre Huyghe Explains His Buzzy *Documenta 13* Installation and Why His Work Is Not Performance Art," *Artinfo Canada*, August, 30 2012, www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/822127/pierre-huyghe-explains-his-buzzy-documenta-13-installation-and-why-his-work-is-not-performance-art/page/0/2.
11. Emma Lavigne, interview by the author at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, June 25, 2014.
12. Giorgio Agamben, *What Is an Apparatus? And Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Padetella (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 14.
13. Agamben, *What Is an Apparatus?* 24 and 28.
14. Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harmanin, "Towards a Speculative Philosophy," in *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, ed. Bryant, Srnicek, and Harmanin (Melbourne: re.press, 2011).
15. Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier (New York: Continuum, 2008), 5.
16. Bryant, Srnicek, and Harmanin, "Towards a Speculative Philosophy," 3.
17. Manuel De Landa, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2013 [2002]), xiii.
18. De Landa, *Intensive Science*, 18.
19. Julia Michalska, "Pierre Huyghe Creates a Buzz in Paris," *The Art Newspaper*, September 23, 2013, www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/Pierre-Huyghe-creates-a-buzz-in-Paris/30305_249.
20. De Landa, *Intensive Science*, 62.
21. Nicolas Fourgeaud and Tristan Trémeau, "Pierre Huyghe et Philippe Parreno: l'institution enchantée," *art press*, April 2004, www.artpress.com/article/04/03/2014/-pierre-huyghe-et-philippe-parreno-linstitution-enchantee/29403#sthash.fz8afggv.dpuf, 410.
22. Pierre Huyghe, quoted in Chiara Zampetti, "Live Art: Q+A with Pierre Huyghe," *Art in America*, September 13, 2011, www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/interviews/pierre-huyghe-esther-schipper/.
23. Huyghe, quoted in Zampetti, "Live Art."
24. Rirkrit Tiravanija, "Pierre Huyghe," *Interview Magazine*, February 10, 2011, www.interviewmagazine.com/art/pierre-huyghe/#_.