

Perspectiva 5

19.11.2004 –18.12.2004

Anne-Marie Cornu

The work of **Anne-Marie Cornu** (Poitiers, 1961) treads a precarious line between post-structuralist methodologies for critiquing the filmic image and the more Dionysian rewards of decorative display. Being her first solo exhibition in Barcelona -and the inaugural exhibition of the city's newest project space, Espai Ubú- the work was presented without the advantage of context. The decorative was thus inevitably foregrounded, initially suggesting that **Cornu's** work privileges the recent revival of 'beauty' as a thematic in contemporary art production. And yet, while this observation is not without foundation, the more aesthetic and theatrical components of the work merely offer an accessible entrée into a complex and analytical project that, since 1988, has seen **Cornu** evolve from apprentice filmmaker to accomplished artist whose work astutely critiques that medium.

Trained in cinematography at la Ecole Nationale Louise Lumière, Paris, and at the Sorbonne, Cornu is a co-founder of the experimental cinema laboratory, L'Abominable, and a member of the artist and architect group, Atelier 110.

While her initial involvement was in more conventional 35mm filmmaking, **Cornu** came to question its formal constraints and looked increasingly towards the experimental. Rejecting structuralism's reductive methodologies, logocentricity and narrative-based agendas, she became part of the younger generation of artists influenced by post-structuralism and engaging with an analysis of the moving image that eschews the imposition of one reading over another. Her work typically reduces text to the status of signifier (as a projected formal image), while reconstructing the visual component of film or television into radically different systems of representation and display. Often site-specific or reconfigured for specific locations, recent installations have frequently taken the work out of the gallery and into nature.

For *Perspectiva 5*, her installation at Espai Ubú, **Cornu** took as the subject of critique the live television transmission received over the building's communal aerial. Feeding this signal into a video projector, the resulting image was immediately intercepted by bundles of fibre optic cables. Hundreds of these thin translucent fibres then fanned out in a series of wave-like forms that occupied the entirety of the exhibition space. Open to the public only during the hours of darkness, the installation radiated a web of light that resonated in response to the television signal but in a form that subverted any literal or narrative reading.

While maintaining the relationship with the televised transmission, the reconfiguration of image not only challenged the dominance of narrative content, but translated the familiar teleological time-scale of conventional filmmaking from a linear experience into the '*enduring present*' associated with art-as-object (although, perhaps the problematics of theatricality arising from Minimalism's art-as-object debate might also be appropriate here). Just as structuralism privileged the 'word', so within more



conventional cinematic terms of reference the dominance of narrative largely determines the structure of film. This dichotomy between filmic presence -the formal quality of the medium as a thing in itself- and the often conflicting temporal nature of the unfolding narrative, lies at the crux of **Cornu's** project.

Perspectiva 5 suggests much of the ambient presence of television, as for example when we experience the light emitted by a television screen reflected back from the walls of a darkened room, and is an invitation to reconsider our relationship to that ubiquitous household item. Beginning with the Conceptualist interventions of the late-sixties, on the rare occasions when television has stepped out of its commercialist straitjacket, the rewards have been substantial. A case in point was Derek Jarman's *Blue* (1993), a feature-length monologue scripted by the filmmaker as he was dying of AIDS and accompanied throughout by the unvarying ambience of a blue screen. The universal acclaim when it was transmitted on British television gives some indication that wider audiences are willing to participate in the deconstruction of the tired clichés of that medium.

Accompanying **Cornu's** installation was a programme of short film pieces, including a film/performance staged on the opening night. Originated with 16mm film, these works explore the superimposition and/or simultaneous projection of multiple sources -often generated by procedures for introducing chance into the making process- and the cyclic nature of identical film sequences running at variable speeds. In essence, the random element in the equation supersedes narrative content and editorial control, engendering a balance between the various possible readings.

Coinciding with Barcelona's Off-Loop festival, **Cornu's** installation represented a positive start for this new exhibition venue.