55. | The Human Factor





2018, France, 15 min, color, stereo.
Courtesy of the artist and Art Front Gallery, Tokyo.
Ed. of 5 + 2 A.P.

« The Human Factor » est une video expérimentale qui traite de l'art décoratif et de l'exotisme. Sur fond d'exposition coloniale internationale de 1931 à Paris qui s'est déroulé pen-dant l'entre deux guerres, certaines oeuvres indigènes des colonies côtoyaient celles des principales puissances coloniales de l'époque au sein de pavillons rappelant l'architecture de l'Afrique noir, de l'Afrique du nord, ou de l'Indochine.

La vidéo « The Human Factor » décompose le film « L'inhumaine » de Marcel L'Hérbier (1923). Ce film est considéré encore aujourd'hui comme le manifeste de l'art dé-coratif. Ce chef d'œuvre du cinéma muet, tourné dans des décors modernes et spec-taculaires pour l'époque, retrace l'esprit du temps et les influences des artistes euro-péens par les créations venant des Art lointains. « L'inhumaine » regroupe de ma-nière inédite des artistes, décorateurs, costumiers et architectes, comme Robert Mallet-Stevens, Fernand Leger, Alberto Cavalcanti, Claude Autant-Lara, Pierre Chareau, Michel Dufet, Joseph Csaky et Paul Poiret. « The Human Factor » tente de montrer un autre aspect de l'Art décoratif, sous la puissance de l'idéologie coloniale et son ambition universelle.

Il faut dire que l'influence de l'art colonial n'est pas nouvelle en cette période de l'entre deux guerres. Elle existait depuis 1907 sous le nom de « la société coloniale des artistes français », et dont le but était l'expansion coloniale par l'art,

« The Human Factor » is an experimental video work that explores the idea surrounding Art Deco and Exoticism. Exhibits concerning the native people of the colonies at the Paris Colonial Exposition which took place in 1931 during the interwar period, as presented within pavilions reminiscent of the architecture of the Black Africa, North Africa, and Indochina regions, had illustrated ties to the leading colonial rule and authority of the times.

« The Human Factor » is a deconstruction of Marcel L'Herbier's film L'inhumaine (1923). To this day, this film is considered as a manifesto of the Art Deco movement. This masterpiece in silent film that was filmed against the backdrop of modern and ornate set design, serves to vividly depict the various influences artists of the time had gained from the creations of distant foreign lands, as well as the very spirit that had permeated the era. L'inhumaine reconfigures the innovative methods of artists, decorators, costumers, and architects such as Robert Mallet-Stevens, Fernand Léger, Alberto Cavalcanti, Claude Autant-Lara, Pierre Chareau, Michel Dufet, Joseph Csaky, and Paul Poiret. This video work attempts to present another aspect of Art Deco that lay beneath the powers of colonialist ideology and its universal ambition.

It should be noted that the influence of colonial art was not something that had emerged during the two wars of the twentieth century. Such had in fact existed since 1907 in the form of the "The Colonial Society of French Artists," which was aimed at expanding colonial territory through art that would serve as beneficial to France. Awards and provisions of expenses to travel to the colonies were provided by the society, aiding artists such as Van Dongen, Matisse, and

au profit de la France. Des prix et des bourses de voyages ont été attribué pour aider des artistes comme Van Dongen, Matisse ou Paul Klee à séjourner en Afrique du Nord(1). En 1919 la revue « Les Arts à Paris » parle déjà de l'art « nègre » comme d' « Une esthétique nouvelle » qui risque d'influencer complètement l'art européen. Ainsi les masques et les sculptures africaines sont devenue de vrais objets de curiosité et d'inspirations pour des artistes comme Picasso, ou Fernand Léger qui a conçu tous les costumes et les décors du Ballet Suédois « La création du Monde » en s'inspirant de « l'Art indigène et africain ». Une autre exposition a été organisée en 1930 par Tristan Tzara, Pierre Loeb et Charles Ratton sous le titre « L'Exposition d'art africain et océanien ». Celle-ci constitue une étape primordiale dans l'histoire de l'appréhen-sion des arts premiers en occident. Le public parisien a pu voir alors des sculptures primitives exposées avec des œuvres de Pablo Picasso, André Derain, Georges Braque, Joan Miró, Paul Guillaume et Félix Fénéon (2).

Puis vient finalement l'exposition coloniale de 1931 qui a affiché d'une manière claire l'idéologie coloniale n'évoquant les caractères originels des colonisés qu'à la condi-tion d'évoquer les bienfaits de la métropole et de ne montrer de la colonisation que les aspects positifs. A l'exception de quelques masques, statuettes et pièces archéologiques, les œuvres indigènes sont rares. On leur préfère en générale les spectacles de danses et de folklore, de ce fait dans le domaine artistique c'est le point de vue français et occidental qui fut privilégié.

Il faut savoir aussi que cette vision n'a pas été partagée par l'ensemble des artistes français, puisque le groupe des surréalistes avec l'aide de Louis Aragon, Georges Sadoul et André Breton entre autres, a monté « L'Anti-exposition coloniale » sous l'égide du Part communiste français en diffusant un mot d'ordre sur le tract- « Ne visitez pas L'Exposition coloniale ». Ainsi la video « The Human Factor » aborde l'exposition coloniale qui a officialisé en quelque sorte le lien entre le primitivisme de l'avant garde et l'exotisme de l'art déco d'inspiration coloniale.

Studio Fatmi, Septembre 2018.

Reference : (1) Publication « Paris 1919-1937 Art et Culture - Vincent Bouvet et Gerard Duro-zoi », édition Hazan 2009. (2) Galerie Pigalle Afrique Océanie 1930 Une exposition mythique - Charles-Wes-ley Hourdé et Nicolas Rolland, Somogy éditions d'Art 2018

Autres references : Exposition internationale des Arts et des Techniques dans la vie moderne, Paris 1937 cinquantenaire, institut français d'architecture / Paris - musées / 1987 - cata-logue réalisé sous la direction de Bernard Lemoine, assisté de Philippe Rivoirard

Paul Klee to sojourn in North Africa. By 1919, the Les Arts à Paris magazine had already introduced Art Nègre (African Art) as a "new aesthetic" that could have a great influence on European art. For example, African masks and sculptures became a subject of interest and source of inspiration for artists such as Picasso, as well as Fernand Léger who derived the ideas for his costume designs and stage sets for the Swedish ballet troupe "La création du Monde" through referencing "Aboriginal and African Art." Furthermore in 1930, the "Exhibition of African Art and Oceanic Art" was held, organized by Tristan Tzara, Pierre Loeb and Charles Ratton. This exhibition served as an important step in the history surrounding primitive art in the West. Here, the Paris public was able to view a selection of primitive sculptures presented along with the works of Pablo Picasso, André Derain, Georges Braque, Joan Miró, Paul Guillaume and Félix Fénéon.

Finally, at the 1931 Paris Colonial Exposition that served to present colonial ideologies in an explicit way, the distinct characteristics of respective ethnic groups in the colonies were only introduced under conditions of conveying France's blessings to the colonies, in addition to solely the positive aspects of colonial development. With the exception of several masks, statuettes, and archaeological items, very few, if any, works made by the native people of the regions were exhibited. As opposed to such works, people in general had preferred the spectacle of pageantry created within the realms of dance, folk arts, and art, which in itself was a convenient perspective for the French and Western audience as a whole.

It must also be known that these perspectives had not necessarily been shared among French artists. A group of surrealists including figures such as Louis Aragon, Georges Sadoul and André Breton, with the support of French Communist Party, had opposed the colonial exposition through distributing fliers featuring slogans that discouraged people from visiting. The Human Factor is a video work that approaches the issue surrounding the Paris Colonial exhibition, which had publically presented the relationship between what one might refer to as Avant-garde Primitivism, and the Exoticism of the Art Deco as inspired by the colonies.

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“In his experimental video The Human Factor, Fatmi cut together scenes from L’inhumaine (The Inhuman Woman) (1924), a silent movie directed by Marcel L’Herbier, with images of the “exotic” Other. A split screen juxtaposes the geometric lines and patterns of the set with the fractal shapes and spires seen in distinctly non-Western buildings. A close-up of actress Georgette Leblanc wearing a feathered headpiece appears on screen next to a photograph of leopard- and zebra-skin rugs draped over furniture. The work draws a direct line between the “manifesto for Art Deco,” as the French film has been hailed retrospectively, and what the Moroccan artist describes as Avant-garde Primitivism.”

Art Asia Pacific, January 2019

exhibitions:

2021

Rencontres Internationales Paris/Berlin - Video Festival

2020

Fonction critique 2 - Aperto - Expo collective

23èmes Rencontres Internationales Traverse - Video Festival

2019

Speaking Power To (Post) Truth - Jane Lombard Gallery - Expo collective

Nuit Blanche - Vincennes - Expo collective

28e édition Festival Coté Court - Video Festival

21st edition Videoex Festival - Video Festival

32es Instants Vidéo Marseille - Video Festival

37ème Festival Tous Courts - Video Festival

2018

The Human Factor - Tokyo Metropolitan Teien Art Museum - Solo show



The Human Factor

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Art Asia Pacific, January 2019



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