

Miguel Abreu Gallery is pleased to announce the opening, on Sunday, April 24th, of *Films and Their Sites*, the first full-scale exhibition in the United States of the work of renowned French filmmakers Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet. Organized by Jean-Louis Raymond, the show is comprised of film still sequences, videos and annotated scripts, among other materials. It attempts to shed light on the couple's meticulous and formally innovative adaptations of works by giants of Western art and literature, such as Sophocles, Corneille, Bach, Hölderlin, Cézanne, Brecht, Schönberg, Kafka, and Pavese, to name a few.

In 1998, when he was invited to speak on the moving image at the École des Beaux-Arts in Le Mans, Dominique Païni, then-director of the Cinémathèque Française, proposed that Jean-Louis Raymond, along with Servane Zanotti and Pascal Kern put together an exhibition on the cinema of Straub and Huillet. Païni knew that they were great admirers of the filmmakers – with whom they had worked some years prior – and he wanted to establish a relationship between the Cinémathèque and the art school. The three thus conceived and realized the exhibition under the auspices of the École, but addressed an ‘amateur’ public, in the best sense of the word: the non-initiated. Far from presuming to be an indispensable preliminary to the discovery and appreciation of Straub and Huillet's oeuvre, the show aimed to favor reflection, allowing the audience time to gauge the film stills on display as active metonyms of the film from which they were extracted.

As Jean-Louis Raymond has written, “We did not hesitate to plunge into this paradoxical adventure, which consisted in exhibiting a cinematic oeuvre — a temporal object which might well have proved resistant to the interrupted presentation of its flux by an isolated film still; a freeze-framed image supposed to attest to a cinematographic creation.

“While for many films this procedure would simply have fallen into the register of documentation (images extracted as memory-aids, or for informational purposes), for Huillet and Straub it afforded new insights into one of the essential aspects of their work: framing. The Straubs' frame conveys time; it is inscribed within the duration of the image. Its precision, so propitious for the grasping of the cinematographic movement, opens up a space which gives rise to an experience that is unique, new every time, an experience inscribed within a place whose primary analogy is the frame of painting.“It is this frame that the stills exhibit to us. They relate directly to the films, of course; but they also reveal a powerful autonomy and an expressive force of their own. It is their fundamental plastic quality that resolved us to conceive the exhibition in this way.

“The work of Straub and Huillet is exemplary, in its engagement of an artistic form sustained both by the history of painting and cinema, but also of literature, philosophy, music, and theatre—and by

the rigor of the choices that preside over its realization, inconceivable without the intense labor that goes into the varied elements that must be brought together in its development. The original documents with which the Straubs entrusted us, some of which appear in the exhibition, are testimony to this. The Cinémathèque Française gave us access to films and archives that we were able to view with the necessary attention to make a meaningful selection within the framework of our project. Marianne de Fleury, Stéphane Dabrowski and many others, both at rue de Longchamp and at Saint Cyr, were of invaluable assistance.”

The present exhibition will include a presentation of Huillet and Straub’s *Every Revolution is a Throw of the Dice*, their 1977 staging of Mallarmé’s groundbreaking poem “A Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance,” along with the looped projection of a segment of *History Lessons*. Further, several evening screenings of late video works by Jean-Marie Straub, paired with documentary films focusing on the couple’s working methods, will occur during the run of the show.

Following previous iterations of the exhibition in Europe – at Ecole Supérieure des Beaux Arts du Mans (1999), Centre National de la Photographie in Paris (2000), the French Embassy in Rome (2000), the Locarno Film Festival (2000), Mediatheque de Metz (2002), Villa Arson in Nice (2004), and at the École d’Art de Grenoble (2012) – the present incarnation coincides with the first complete North American retrospective of the filmmakers’ work, opening at The Museum of Modern Art on May 6th.

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