

## 'I AM A HOLOGRAM'

### Raimundas Malašauskas

*If there's one curator who knows how to give new meaning to the concept of the 'exhibition', it's Raimundas Malašauskas. The Lithuanian-born, Paris-based curator always comes up with an original plan for presenting art. Right now he is working on a twenty-part show on hypnosis. Earlier this year, he made an exhibition in Brussels with holograms.*

by Jennifer Teets

Talking over coffee is one of Raimundas Malašauskas's social fortes. I realized it recently when I sifted through an email archive where he first proclaimed his coffee penchant to me. Instead of writing about coffee, he sent me coffee. Not your usual coffee though. This was a virtual cup, sent to 2011 from 2007. Raimundas snapped a picture of the creamy double espresso we drank together at Café de Carlo in Mexico City. It documents a daunting coffee magic act. An image and its flipside: two spoons, one cup, one spoon, one cup – voilà!

I always wondered why he sent this to me. Beyond simply connoisseurship, why in the world would a curator ramble on about coffee perfection? Years later, things became a little clearer. Like a conversation, coffee, as Raimundas would remark, 'could be implied as a medium of sophistication and continuous excelling. Good espresso is about concentration too.' I then learned that his coffee reveries, much like musings on contrasts and diversification, were ways to approach everyday variation – the how's and do's of making a heart-pumping fuel flawless.

That said, now I find myself in the 7<sup>ème</sup> arrondissement in Paris at the Coutume café on Rue de Babylone, the latest addition to the city's burgeoning boutique coffee scene. Again we meet for coffee. Raimundas arrives wearing a t-shirt stylized in Vogue magazine lettering reading, 'I am not from Paris. I am

Paris.' I order a latte. He starts out ordering a cold water 24-hour-drip coffee, but the waiter exclaims, 'I've just put it on, come back tomorrow.' Raimundas then settles for a French-style Guatemalan bean espresso with a micro-jar of hot water.

We begin talking by addressing 'place'. I ask him, 'What does it mean to be placeless, really?' He responds by characterizing his life inside of the discontinuous chamber of his own actions and gestures, slippery and ether-like. Paris is his place for now because he enjoys Paris, but then I realize he's everywhere in between times, like Brussels, Vienna, Kassel (he's charted as one of the curatorial agents of *DOCUMENTA* (13)).

#### HYPNOSIS

For some time, Raimundas has been working on his 20-session and running *Hypnotic Show*. He explains to me its axis: specially commissioned artists' texts on utopian exhibitions which are implanted into the minds of participants via group hypnosis sessions by artist-psychotherapist LA performer Marcos Lutyens. 'You are the show,' Raimundas adds. He also adds that it is his longest-lasting project to date and it is the most radical structure of them all. It abolishes the concept of the exhibition as something external to the public by claiming that it only takes place in your mind. Hence, it uses the brain as a sculptural destination – not in the sense of spatial structures, per-

formance, or a replica of an existing object, but demonstrates how mind power can emanate a show. 'It's like placebo and nocebo playing together.'

Raimundas argues that the agency in which new curatorial procedures arise and persist prioritizes his curatorial work. I question this affirmation and ask why public presentation is so important to him. Why couldn't curatorial work come to life in another form that isn't persecuted by exhibition-making? Why make an exhibition? An announcement? Why always a self-referencing act? He elusively replies, 'You're talking about all the Robert Barrys and pata-physicians and not knowing who received the work and those who received it not knowing they did. In the case of *Hypnotic Show* we are still talking about how an exhibition could be articulated.' I pause to wonder if other structures still could be more proactive. Raimundas, nonchalant and self-assured, seems confident about his methods of finding, creating, or discovering spaces for things to happen.

#### TIME

We continue by discussing the exhibition *Done: Exploring Fatal Holography* at the Tulips & Roses gallery in Brussels. Formally, it is rather ambiguous and gestural. It doesn't consist of much besides four hologram portraits of two Lithuanian twins with the sur-



name Praspaliauskas, artist Darius Miksys, and a group portrait showing Raimundas, Miksys and the twins suspended in an empty painting frame. In the main exhibition space lies a carpet and various objects resting on top of it. Another framed portrait, by photographer Alexandre Guirkinge, leans against the wall, though this time it's an advertising photograph from a Hermès bag campaign, and since it's rotated it appears surreal – a discernible face peers out of the crevices of the bag. Another portrait hangs on the wall: a copy of a famous Lithuanian painting titled *The Sitting Woman* – flipping the painting you realize it is double-sided and was made in the context of Italian artist Alex Cecchetti's *Salon du Mercredi* (a private thematic night event in Paris during which unusual topics are revealed and explored by artists and friends) and painted by Roman Sein. The show's poster is handwritten by Egidijus Praspaliauskas, one of the twins in the hologram.

The idea for *Done* was initially conceived in 2008 after Raimundas saw a few holograms of Salvador Dalí's work; during the same year he also visited the Museum of Holography at MIT in Boston. The title is derived from thinker Paul Perry and relates to the notion of fatal holography. It is an attempt to intermix research on time ('There is no before and after in this space-time,' says Raimundas), physical position inside of the hologram, and space's astro-parameters in a very concrete form, such as a surface. He tells me about how he abolished his first idea of grouping together works in a holographic plane because it would seem too much like an exhibition in PDF format – a bit flawed. Instead, he reverted to speaking with artists close to him and decided to synthesize what they were telling him.<sup>1</sup> 'I thought I could be a kind of hologram myself and certain things that they were saying would reflect in my brain, and I would recompose that thinking in a hologram. "Can you imagine yourself as a tapestry, or as a sphere that doesn't need to spin to show infinite views?" Mariana Castillo Deball responded to me. In that sense I didn't move quite far with what I had been doing for a while, which is creating portraits. Clifford Irving as a portrait. John Fare as a portrait. Mardi is a character that was created by more than 50 people I had invited to write Mardi's portrait for the *Repetition Island* show

at Centre Pompidou in the summer of 2010. In this case, we have a portrait too. In a way it's about creating a character. The ownership of the character becomes fluid because this character is composed of two persons. The same scheme should be applied to the whole exhibition. It's an exhibition as a character that is composed of multiple players. And one of them, a very important one, is Jonas and Aurime – the gallerists. Because they make that exhibition happen when someone comes into the gallery. And my wish was to give up the authorship of all kinds of possible meanings that they will create with the audience. I don't even know what they are telling people. It's my not business almost.'

I sense that Raimundas is not keen on prescribed meanings. He's more interested in how an audience's reaction to the show makes up the show and becomes part of it. 'A hologram is like a concentration of all possible analogies; you can speak about many things through the hologram. It's a medium of analogy. It is a machine of analogies.' When I asked what's next in line he concludes, 'I entered the "H" and I'm still in the letter "H". Maybe in the next project it will be "Homonymy" or "Herbarium" (*laughs*). I will become a "Herbarium" man. You know, like selling herbs and spices.' Later, when I discovered that Benjamin Seror and Judith Braun had already contributed herb wall paintings and campy flower jackets to Raimundas's latest exhibition, *What About This* curated for the Andreas Huber Gallery in Vienna, I realized the joke wasn't entirely out of place.

Jennifer Teets is a curator and writer based in Paris and Rome

- *Raimundas Malašauskas: Photo Finish*  
CAC Vilnius (Lithuania)  
through 15 January 2012
- Lecture & booklaunch (*Sandberg Series*)  
Goethe-Institut,  
Amsterdam  
8 February 2012

<sup>1</sup> See also: <http://sunvysne.tumblr.com/>