

Turbidity

[Ambiguous occurrences]

"A river, as distinct from a pond, flows. But its flow gives a definiteness and interest to its successive portions greater than exist in the homogenous portions of a pond. In an experience, flow is from something to something. As one part leads into another and as one part carries on what went before, each gains distinctness in itself. The enduring whole is diversified by successive phases that are emphases of its varied colors." ¹. This image taken from John Dewey singularly reflects the liquidity of the work of Edith Dekyndt. Yet rather than carrying us on the surface of things, these waterways thrust us into their midst, and draw us into the flux of their formation. The river metaphor is particularly resonant in the work she has created for the exhibition *Slow Stories* at La BF15, in the centre of Lyon, a city traversed by two rivers and steeped in the history of film, silk weaving, and the chemical industry, and which is bathed in a light all its own. In this panorama, those familiar with the artist's work will recognise the 'active ingredients' which give rise to her typologies, not of forms, but of flux, or to borrow the term favoured by Gilles Deleuze, of 'haecceities' ('this-nesses'). Ripples of water or light, chemical reactions, fabric opening up so many informal relationships in which the works of Edith Dekyndt constitute the facts. After all, the artist is not out to perceive the condition of things, but to perceive through things, by engaging us in the '*choséité*' (thingness) in motion.

It is the sixth iteration of her *Slow Objects* that meets us full on at La BF15. A huge, finely woven woollen blanket covered in silver leaf is hung on a purpose-built wall. She exposes its light-sensitive surface to the daylight which enters the space through the large windows in the facade, and it blocks the deeper view which one would ordinarily have. You have to walk behind it to discover, in the more neutral and intimate setting of a glass-roofed workshop at the end of the courtyard, a yellowish translucent block resting on a white table. In *Water Album 01 (La Saône, Lyon, France)*, the delicate walls of an aquarium hold 220 litres of water taken from the river which runs past the art centre, but through a chemical process provided to the artist by a company based in the region, the water has been gelled.

The effect of these two rooms is not so much physical— they remain essentially visual, and above all, unassuming - but in the way our tendency to visualise the phenomenon is spontaneously activated. A synecdoche of photography in one, and of a river, in the other, each presents an image frozen in a cinematic sequence. Yet to interpret the metaphor so simply would be to neglect the living character of these image-making forms, and the vulnerability of these consistent images which are directly reflected within ourselves. *Water Album* is not merely the cutting of a river, made possible thanks to the chemical industry, or metaphorically, an image from a film, but it wavers like the ambiguous reality of a phenomenality. It appears to us in its state as a thing, in itself reducible or irreducible to another, or rather, in the principle of 'irreduction' as described by Bruno Latour, caught in a network of different modes of existence.

Aside from the somewhat anecdotal image of the chemist, the reconciliation of art and science as a recurring element in the work of Edith Dekyndt should be understood in the context of the ideas which have shaped the current turn in the humanities (in which, as a philosopher, Latour is a leading voice). This is based not so much on a proximity of aims as on the method involving devising an experimental protocol. The artist, like the scientist, invents systems for making reality 'speak', however, instead of the determinism of 'telling', prefers the image-representation, the potentiality of 'making' the image-tool. In the field of art, like in the sciences, the question of ontology has thus caught up with that of fiction as a process of transformation and interpretation. And it is by amplifying this wave mechanism, both materially and fictionally, that the artist sets up this scenario of 'bringing into being'.

So we should be wary of the still waters of Edith Dekyndt. *Water Album* is not a final sculptural

representation of nature, but through its living mixture, it incorporates us into time or, as Tristan Garcia puts it, more specifically into the continuous 'variation of intensity of the presence' of which the presence is the 'point', and the future, this 'maximum indetermination' (« *variation d'intensité continue de la présence* », dont le présent est la « *pointe* », et l'avenir, cette « *indétermination maximale* »)². At this instant, we are split within 'the existing' as in a process of formation of 'fictitious identities' (*êtres de fiction*)³, or in a narrative which is no longer structured by intentionality being brought to bear upon the material, but which arises as 'a consequence of the visible (apparent) images themselves, of the perceptible images in themselves, as they are initially defined for themselves' (*une conséquence des images apparentes elles-mêmes, des images sensibles en elles-mêmes, telles qu'elles se définissent pour elles-mêmes*)⁴. A plethora of visions are summoned on the delicate skin of this silver screen which sags under its own weight and fragility, or in the putrid, aqueous mass congealed in the long aquarium. And the inevitable anthropomorphic dimension she wields further confirms that constituting the image is indeed derived from the corporeality, or more precisely, from an 'operation that transforms one corporeality into another' (*opération qui transforme une corporéité en une autre*)⁵.

The pathways of the imagination and scientific objectivity need no longer be at odds, but become aligned in the place where ontology touches the epistemology of images, as fabricated from this 'hiatus' or from this 'being qua another' (*être-en-tant-qu'autre*)⁶.

Following what is now a mere reference in these two rooms, the power of the cinema as both a mythical and a scientific force is here consumed by its own vision. In the space between them, a projection of black-and-white archival footage suggests fleeting memory. It is a film of net-fishing from the 1930s by amateur cineaste Robert Dasché (*Pêche à l'épervier*) digitised by the Pôle image Haute-Normandie. Exhibited in one of her videos (*A is hotter than B*) in a previous exhibition⁷, the footage so fascinated Edith Dekyndt that she decided to incorporate it into *Slow Stories* as well. In turn, we too are hypnotised, caught in the mesh of the net as if in an instant of perpetual re-becoming.

At the heart of Edith Dekyndt's body of work, ambiguity thus conveys this paradoxical status of ontology as it has been redefined by the leading metaphysicians of her age, whom she echoes by applying a scientific model directly to life as an interpretive practice. If we are able to assign so many images to the works of Edith Dekyndt, it is because they offer a living process which never anchors us in the illustration of one or the other, but which plunges us into their midst, into their 'varied colors'.

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1 - John Dewey, *L'art comme expérience*, Gallimard, collection Folio Essais, 2010. p. 82

2 - Tristan Garcia, *Forme et objet. Un traité des choses*, PUF, 2011, p. 195

3 - Bruno Latour, "Situer les êtres de fictions", *Enquête sur les modes d'existence : Une anthropologie des Modernes*, La découverte, 2012, p. 237-259

4 - Gilles Deleuze, *L'Image-temps*, Minuit, 1985, p. 40

5 - Jacques Rancière, "Les images veulent-elles vraiment vivre ?", Emmanuel Alloa (éd.), *Penser l'image*, Les Presses du réel, 2010, p. 260

6 - Bruno Latour, op. cit.

7 - Robert Dasché, *Pêche à l'épervier*, 1936, 16mm NB, silent, ref 0002S0001. Coll. Mémoire Audiovisuelle de Haute-Normandie. Original montage screened during the exhibition *Water Diary*, a dialogue between artists videos and amateur films, FRAC Haute-Normandie / Pôle Image Haute-Normandie, 25 April - 8 September 2013.