GILLES PEGEL **DISORGANIZED INFO-DUMP**

Gilles Pegel's installations work like breathing, cracks in the serried weft of reality. You broach them the way you approach a door behind which nobody knows what is there. The subtle perversions he introduces into his works function on differing levels and cause visitors to sense breaks in the apparent continuity of our reality, question it, and challenge it. Things are never really what they are, let's get back to essentials, this is what Gilles is trying to tell us.

"*This is fine*", "*Cumulus homogenitus*", "*Hardfork*", "*Timesink*", "*Evidence*", "*A day lasts 60 minutes*", and "*Celestial bodies*", the titles complete the works and open up a field of tension from whose heart a new equilibrium emanates. Like Piero Manzoni [1], whose work inspires this artist, Gilles Pegel's communication is part and parcel of his compositional work. The titles act on the codes which structure our understanding of the world. They are posited the way the enigma of the sphinx is posited to the Oedipus-visitor, questioning the tragic hero about his humanity.

The choice made by the artist for the title of the show wittily illustrates a far-reaching knowledge and reflection about the "technological" state of the world. The "info-dump", or the blind use of copy/paste in data exchanges, is one of the seemingly insignificant consequences of the outsourcing of knowledge and the human memory. By laughing at these aberrations and by paradoxically applying them to the result of his craftsmanship, the artist raises the following question: can the acceleration of data exchanges and their exponential growth, and the cybernetic science, on which are based the latest technological developments and prospects regarding man's enhancement, still be regarded as an advance for humankind?

In their co-authored book, "*Tout est accompli*", Yannick Haenel, François Meyronnis and Valentin Retz draw our attention to the de-humanization being brought about by science. The cybernetic system has an independent life by way of human beings who now only exist to incarnate this system:

"*Norbert Wiener himself had a hunch that cybernetics, that new science invented to forever prevent the comeback of a lethal power, like nazism, was, in reality, merely re-introducing this same death-dealing power, heightening it through the reign of algorithms. If this process usually goes unnoticed, this is because it is being deployed on a level quite unlike that of politics. As Jean Baudrillard already noted, the advent of the virtual is also a form of the disappearance of beings and things in favour of something ghostlike being endlessly produced by the instantaneous nature of networks. This is how we are quite naturally heading towards the automatic factory, cyborgism and the hold that silicon has over the living world...*" [2]

The networking of the world would turn humans into ghosts, slaves of an arrangement that programmes them in its image and only lets them exist within its grip. The simultaneity induced by the networked connection cancels time and stifles the human soul: everything is always available, at any time, in any place, ad nauseam. The exponential augmentation of man's capacities and the abolition of time by technology do not improve man but rather confine him within a world outside himself, which is by definition inhuman. Gilles alerts us, in his own way, to the urgent need to do a sidestep. He offers us valuable testimony by allowing time the time to act on matter. In bridging the great gap between the infinitely large (the universe) and the infinitely small (the elements of matter), and by perverting scales and re-contextualizing objects in an elsewhere (hard drives become clouds, a steel ball, a planet; a piece of asphalt, an asteroid sample; traces of carbon, a map of the world, or a Petri dish), these staged presentations which the artist invites us take part in, offer us a chance to stand back, put things into perspective, and think about our real place in this world.

Each installation puts man's relation to time into perspective, and more particularly the visitor's time. It took light several years to discolour the fabric in the "*Timesink*" series. Here, the artistic act goes beyond the limits of the artist's limited action. Just as the Greek bard invokes the deity to take possession of his soul and talk through him, so the artist literally invokes time passing to let him act and leave his mark on matter. The work "*Evidence*" is the repetition of an act already undertaken then undone, which is completely renewed with each exhibition. The series of "*Hardfork*" sculptures takes up the theme of the helix, an archetypal form that runs through the artist's oeuvre. He used it in his early graffiti for technical-cum-aesthetic reasons, and, as he himself says, for reasons of easiness, but it re-appears in several works before imposing itself as an independent object. The evolution of the helix is emblematic of his working method: he composes, he sets aside, and he takes up again. He lets time work for him and the lapse functions naturally. His objects and his obsessions shift and take on meaning with each new contextualization, in a sort of phased readymade, whose object is its own objects. "*A day lasts 60 minutes*" tells us about the acceleration of time in our connected societies. The quicker time passes, the more the world shrinks. If this view also puts the position of the earth in perspective in this immense universe, as well as the time-based rules which the earth imposes on us, what would the human condition be like if the day/night cycle only lasted 60 minutes instead of 24 hours? The series "*Cumulus homogenitus*" lays bare, with a certain cruelty, the fate awaiting hard drives once they have been used. These drives on which are engraved snippets of lives, hidden in computers, evoke our digital unconscious. They raise the ageless question of the "remains" in the sacrificial rite, in a globalized society which summons all the world's matter in its fire. Clouds wittily symbolize matter and thought which rise into the sky to rejoin the invisible.

The seeming simplicity of his works, and the withdrawal he imposes on himself, mask a profound way of thinking about the role that is assigned to those we label "artists". Because this artist subtly speaks out against the codes which confine us within a certain vision of the world, why not start by unostentatiously speaking out against the role assigned to him by the art market's codes? Because in order to sell, the market tends to muddle reflection and communication, and, in this logic, impose a heroic and tragic vision of the artist, somewhere between successful hero and suffering anti-hero. Aware of the challenges of this dialectic, he follows his own path, without identifying with his role. Gilles explores in his own way the confines of the world and the material conditions of our humanity, without making the artist a hero who walked on the moon. Because, in the final analysis, the archetype of the hero would deprive him of his freedom, just as he deprives us all of our freedom. Which makes his work a Jungian (and not Nietzschean) crime scene, where the hero's murder is enacted:

"For this "hero" to be routed, as dreamed of by Jung with the features of Siegfried, such a "hero" would paradoxically represent less the conquering spirit than everything that would dread, like a deserter, the abyss of the within. He would symbolize everything that would be subordinate to surfaces, that would clear itself of the "inland" (thereby aspiring, by way of compensation, to the "meanings" of the outside). He would thus depict everything that would instinctively bow beneath the dogma of an external "model" ("heroic" ideal) to be satisfied..."[3]

François Doneux
Translated from French by Simon Pleasance

[1]-François Doneux, introduction to "Heat sink, a temple to global warming", Wintrange, 2019.
[2]-Yannick Haenel, François Meyronnis and Valentin Retz, Tout est accompli, Paris, Grasset, 2018.
[3]-Luca Governatori, Les nuits de Jung, Almora, Paris, 2019, p. 119.