

Hemiplegic Space / Camering Cross-eyed

“What a godsend to be free to go camering just like a child—or a halfwit—throws pebbles into the water, by which I mean into common stirrings.”

“One needs to invent a camera that goes cross-eyed.”

Fernand Deligny

To the left:

Resident's Meal

The To-do list / Grub in a Nursing Home

Camering Cross-eyed

Kid A's Dishes

To the right:

Hemiplegic (Spasticity of the Leg / Arm that Falls)

Assistant-assisted actors and actresses: Sandra Alvarez de Toledo, Béryl Coulombié, Mariette Cousty, Yannik Denizart, Emmanuel Fouché, Florian Fouché, Philippe Fouché, Adrien Malcor, Martín Molina-Gola, Mariya Nikiforova.

Florian Fouché, May 2023

The artist Florian Fouché (b. 1983) first elaborated the “close actions” of *Assisted Manifesto* in 2015, after several years of working on a sculpture series partly inspired by the Romanian Peasant Museum in Bucharest (*The Antidote Museum*, 2010-2014).

Assisted Manifesto was initially a response to a family tragedy; the first “close action” took place at the hospital that had received the artist’s father, Philippe, after a stroke which had made him hemiplegic. Philippe Fouché still uses a wheelchair today and lives “in an institution” (a nursing home); he continues to be the protagonist of *Assisted Manifesto*. From his father’s bumpy “care path”, and the affections that were born or reborn over its course, the artist has induced a kind of principle of ontological solidarity: “We are all assisted and



Hemiplegic (Spasticity of the Leg / Arm that Falls), 2023

assistants at the same time. Everyone, whether powerful or powerless.”

To “assist” his father, which has meant entering with him a program of “wild rehabilitation”, Florian Fouché had, from the outset, provided himself with an extra-institutional and para-artistic alternative model: the last “attempt” of the educator and writer Fernand Deligny (1913-1996), who, from 1968 and until his death, ran an experimental network for autistic children in the Cévennes region in the south of France. The term “close action” comes from “close presences”, the expression used by Deligny to designate the adults who managed the “living areas” of the Cévennes network on a daily basis. The artist has also reemployed the verb “camering”, coined by this philosopher of images in order to defuse the voluntarism of “filming”. In Florian Fouché’s “close actions”, the camera is an object among other objects and an organ among other organs: it is a mobile “cine-eye” that traverses and animates an environment filled with sculptures-accessories-prostheses.

Over four hundred “close actions” have been performed and “camered” today, with the help of approximately forty “assistant-assisted actors and actresses”. The triptych of screens that display these recordings in Florian Fouché’s exhibitions represent the three creative axes of a corpus in motion: the adventures of the paralyzed father (*Philippe*), the speculative fiction of an autistic hypermemory (*Aberrant Memory (Cubist Novel of the Attempt)*), and the critique of health care institutions (*Assisted Life, Institutional Life, (Re)Habilitated Life*). Each new action extends one of the three tracks, and each new video resets the random arrangement of transversal associations produced by the simultaneous reproduction. It is not a combinatorial or a serial logic that is at play here, but a more or less random modulation of a constructive thought which values above all the poetic multivalence of objects and gestures. It is an amplification of the play of “empathic aberration”, in the artist’s words—simultaneously, an imaginary condition of the gestuality of assistance and a generic process of deformation in accordance with the work of memory. This “empathic aberration” operates within life as within art history: it brings forth characters, like the child-bobbin “Kid A”; it defamiliarizes the gestures

of everyday life (to walk/roll [in a wheelchair], to eat, to wash (oneself)...); it alters or brings closer more or less distant artistic worlds (Constantin Brancusi, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Barnett Newman, Arthur Bispo do Rosário, Yvonne Rainer, Mike Kelley, Henrik Olesen...).

Aberration, chance and *circumstances*, in reality. The work progresses by leaps, as the spatial specificities of each exhibition space offer to the artist new opportunities to redeploy his conceptual network and relaunch the artistic imagination. This was the case at the gallery Parliament (Paris) in 2022, where the exhibition was organized around a raised step that separates the two spaces of the gallery—a threshold step that a person in a wheelchair cannot cross without an access ramp. This was the first *hemiplegic space* produced by the artist, a scenographic transposition of a critical anatomy. In the piece, the artist turns himself into a ramp for his father: the problem of *accessibility* becomes that of *participation*, of overcoming the limit between the stage and the room. The access ramp can be said to both underline and intersect the theatrical ramp.

Florian Fouché has recently taken up this model based on the idea of asymmetrical mobility at the Crac Occitanie contemporary art center (Sète), this time to reflect on his debt towards Fernand Deligny, whose archives and “legends” were the subject of a simultaneous exhibition in the same space (*Fernand Deligny, Legends of the Raft*). The hemiplegic division of the space became a meta-reflection on the problematic encounter of the two exhibitions, the two eras, and the two “pathologies” (autism, hemiplegia), while marking in the building’s architecture the limit which separates any institution from its outside. There, the artist appropriated another idea-motif of Deligny, the “cross-eyed camera”, which takes on a new significance within the hemiplegic space of Parliament’s booth at the Liste Art Fair Basel.

Because Florian Fouché opposes, with audacity, modern constructive thinking to the “orthopedic” norms of rehabilitation, his *Assisted Manifesto* is an important artistic contribution to contemporary political thought on handicap

Parliament

Florian Fouché

Liste Art Fair Basel

June 12-18 2023

36 rue d'Enghien 75010 Paris, Wednesday-Saturday, 12am-6pm

(anti-ableism, disability studies, crip theory). Because it universalizes the question of assistance, his work also throws a vehement, albeit oblique, light on the neoliberal devastation of the public health system (without ever losing sight of the need for experiences outside of the institution).

However, in Florian Fouché’s work, political rage is filtered through a dark humor, and this dark humor is transmuted by a grotesque biomechanics. It is this biomechanics which still assumes the indissociably political and poetic role given to it by Soviet constructivism: “to overcome the everyday in the everyday” (Vsevolod Meyerhold).

Adrien Malcor

Chronology of exhibitions of *Assisted Manifesto*

Manifeste Janmari, 10-rue-Saint-Luc, studio of the publisher L’Arachnéen, Paris, October 2 – November 21, 2020.

Le corps fait grève (group show; curator: Émilie Renard), Bétonsalon, Paris, May 20 – July 24, 2021.

Yto Barrada-A Raft; Carte Blanche/Virtual Cinema (group show; curators: Sandra Alvarez de Toledo, Yto Barrada, River Encalada Bullock, Lucy Gallun, Anaïs Masson), Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, May 8, 2021 – January 9, 2022.

L’Art d’apprendre. Une école des créateurs (group show; curator: Hélène Meisel), Centre Pompidou Metz, 5 February – 29 August 2022.

Manifeste Janmari, Parliament Gallery, Paris, September 9 – October 29, 2022.

Manifeste assisté (curator: Marie Cozette), Centre régional d’art contemporain (Crac) Occitanie, Sète, February 11 – May 29, 2023.

Anka Ptaszkowska: Case by Case (group show; curators: Anka Ptaszkowska, Agnieszka Tarasiuk, Violetta e a, Maria Matuszkiewicz), Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, February 17 – April 23, 2023.

Hemiplegic Space / Cross-Eyed Camera, Liste Art Fair Basel, June 12-18, 2023.