

**PHILIPPE PARRENO TALKS TO ANDREA K. SCOTT ABOUT THE ART OF COLLABORATION.**

French novelist and poet René Daumal once wrote, „without the reserve of shared experiences, all our pronouncements are checks drawn on insufficient funds.“ If he's right, then the art of Philippe Parreno is money in the bank. Over the last decade, Parreno has made a habit—perhaps even an obsession—of collaborating with others on his art projects. To date, he has worked with such artists as Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Jorge Pardo, and Pierre Huyghe, and has invited spectators to participate in his work. And while other collaborative groups remain intact from project to project, Parreno has remained more nomadic, opting instead to seek new partners for nearly every new project.

For his first one-person show in New York at Friedrich Petzel Gallery, the Paris-based artist partnered with AC/DC guitarist Angus Young, photographers Inez van Lamsweerde and Vinoodh Matadin, and design firm M/M, among others, to produce the self-reflexively titled *Credits*, shot on 35 mm and transferred to DVD. Parreno describes *Credits* as a „3-D memory“ of „les grands ensembles,“ the brand of generic postwar housing project where he grew up. Constructed in the late fifties and early sixties, most of these buildings have since been razed without a trace. The film has no credits per se, but Parreno has cast a wide net, citing everyone from the late French prime minister Jacques Chaban-Delmas to the ice cream manufacturer Miko to Alain Peyrefitte, former French minister of the interior as collaborators.

As you enter the gallery, the lights shut off one row at a time, guiding you around a corner, where you discover a video projection: a tree with plastic bags dangling from its bare branches like shabby ornaments. Behind it, a high-rise looms in the distance. The sound track—a single electric guitar—underscores both the beauty and melancholy of the scene. When film ends, the lights come up and a high-pitched voice from another room announces: „My name is Ann-Lee.“ It belongs to a Manga cartoon character that Parreno—in partnership with Pierre Huyghe—purchased the rights to last year (Huyghe's animation was shown earlier this year at Marian Goodman Gallery; other artists have also been invited to interpret it). As Ann-Lee explains „I am a product, freed from the marketplace. I belong to whoever is able to fill me with imaginary material.“ She is, it seems, another shared experience.

**Andrea K. Scott:** You have spoken about cinema's importance as „a model for the exhibition.“ How would you define the space between film and art?

**Philippe Parreno:** This was never really my question. I'm rather interested in the exhibition as a medium. There was a point in history when the exhibition was the main medium; it was the way to show things to people. So there was a show about the Titanic long before the movie. And then movies arrived and it became their job to present history. What was left for exhibition was only the display of objects, the exhibition of art. I am interested in art that deals with the exhibition as something other than a context. When I think about starting a new project I don't think in terms of cinema or anything else but in terms of exhibitions. I am more interested in creating a story than in producing objects. For me shooting a film or making a public space somewhere in a garden is the same.

**AKS:** Do you have any interest in making a film for the venue of the cinema rather than the gallery?

**PP:** I've bought the rights to a book, *Mont Analogue* by René Daumal. The story is about a group expedition and I want the movie to be the same. The actors will be playing out the story, but meanwhile, the crew is on its own expedition, so the process of shooting will mirror what's being shot. I also just like movies. They're fun.

**AKS:** Why is collaboration so essential to your practice? Does it relate to a cinematic model?

**PP:** I keep returning to a moment when I was five years old and just learning what reading was. I was reading this book and, at first, I was spelling out all the letters: one letter, then two letters, and so on. Then suddenly I had this picture in my head from the word. It was purely a magical moment. Collaborations can convey these kinds moments in art. I want to show the audience this kind of experience. I want them to be able to make links between things, to try to see the pictures that are not there, that are provoked or produced by the work.

**AKS:** Why did you collaborate with Angus Young to create the sound track for Credits?

**PP:** When I was growing up, everyone was playing guitar, pretending to be in AC/DC. So it helps locate the picture in a time and place.

**AKS:** This is also the first time you've collaborated with Inez van Lamsweerde.

**PP:** When I first approached M/M [French graphic-design firm and collaborator on Credits] I wanted them to make proper credits for the show, or even a poster for the film. I gave them a list of names. But they proposed that we ask Inez to make a picture acting as credits. So she produced this picture of a little boy, sort of a character from the movie. It's not something that I would have thought of, but it works really well.

**AKS:** Credits is tied to a culturally specific experience. Do you think the American reception of the project will differ from the European?

**PP:** I don't know. People in New York are really educated—maybe too educated. And I always play games. But maybe people in France trust me already and understand my language and my references. Still, I play with notions of authorship, so people don't know exactly where to place me. When you create new work, in a way you don't want to assume what the problem is—because there is always a problem. For example, how does one frame a painting? If you see a Fra Filippo Lippi painting in a church in Rome you'll first see the painting. Then, next to it, a lot of fake marble that Lippi also painted because he had to create something else that was part of the work, as a way to frame the work and tell you how to look at it. This is what an exhibition is: It indicates a way of reading.

**AKS:** Critic Nicolas Bourriaud compares some contemporary art practice to leisure industries, like sports and entertainment. This was also the crux of the Walker Art Center show „Let's Entertain,“ which included your work. Is there any relationship between these ideas and the Ann-Lee project, with its references to Manga and the marketplace?

**PP:** „Let's Entertain“ and the ideas related to it are, in a way, reactionary. The Ann-Lee project is a way to think about similar ideas while continuing to work. It's like a technical course in school. In order to understand how an engine works you have to take it apart. It's also another way to imagine collaborative projects. It's not signed by a group of people. It's like a sign that doesn't represent anything anymore. She's looking for content. Maybe it's nice to have that for an artist. Forget about form. The sign is there. It's as if you have a model, like from the eighteenth century, painted by a lot of different people. In a way, it's quite classical.