

MOUSSE



Eliot Porter, *Chipping Sparrow, Great Spruce Head Island, Maine, June 16, 1971.*
 © 1990 Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas, Bequest of the artist.



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[Ulla von Brandenburg “Innen ist nicht Außen” at Secession, Wien](#)

by [mousse](#)

November 1~2013



*In keeping with some of your previous projects, for your exhibition at Se-
cession you have created a new device linking the film to a structure within the space. Can you tell us about this new production?*

The piece for the Secession is a big wooden construction composed of a grayish-blue wooden stage; visitors enter from the back of this stage. They walk across it down to a red curtain which looks as if it was used for a long time to block the light from overhead, so you see the faded pattern of the windows on the fabric. Passing through this curtain, they reach a symmetrical staircase over three meters high, on the other side of which they discover a projection of my new film *Die Strasse*, and the stairs become seating for the viewers.

So as well as a function deliberately designed to divide up the space, the structure that precedes and includes the screening area is, in a very etymological sense, a preamble to what we will be permitted to see subsequently, and then later in the film: like Marcello, its protagonist, we walk through an architectural structure before certain unexpected events are revealed to us...

After my last films, which are mainly set in houses and rooms, I wanted to make a film on a street, a public space. The architecture in the film suggests a village street. The façades are obviously wooden constructions covered with white canvas, the street is finite, and you can see trees at the end of it. I tried to create a street that was as abstract as possible, using the simplest possible construction. I wanted to have a construction that looked like a stage set in a theater. Also, the installation in the exhibition space is made out of the same materials: fabric and wood. So the whole "theater piece" we see in the film is potentially a theater piece which could happen on that stage. At the same time, film always brings another layer of fiction and a different kind of reality with it. Marcello enters this street like Alice in Wonderland going to the other side of the looking glass, and sees the inhabitants of this street in different scenes which are all new to him. For example, in the beginning, two women brushing their hair, a rehearsal of a handkerchief dance, a "bread dance," tambourine levitation by a woman who is then attacked by the Fur Man, through to a wicker doll being carried off on a stretcher. All of these scenes could be rituals belonging to an unknown culture.

We can see that you often proceed using expedients that connect or even coincide with each other. So, a connection between what we experience within the space and what can be experienced by the characters in the films, and a correlation between the architecture of the Secession setting and the architectural elements in the film, etc. Do you adopt this method to ensure a better grip, a better understanding of your work by the viewer, who will be confronted by a series of enigmatic mysteries?

I work with these correspondences to create several combined systems which are all linked to each other and which can be read in different directions. Letting the viewers enter the theater set first, and allowing them to choose their own way to come to the film, is also a way of activating the viewer's role. And at the same time it provides an initiation for a better comprehension of the film. The main red curtain with the sun-faded traces of the upper windows of the Secession building is important to make a connection with the history and architecture of the building. Beyond that, there are different ways of reading my films, and it is up to the viewer to find his own interpretation and manner of reading.

Die Strasse recaptures certain principles that have been the basis for a number of your previous films: a single long take, no soundtrack except for the protagonists' bursts of song; although in reality they are lipsynched... Could you tell us more about these specific choices?

Because of single-shot filming, my films can also be seen like a live performance; everything takes place in real time. That means that the viewing time is exactly the same length as the filming time.

So the time is "real", but not the sound. The actors are miming to voices which are not their own; this creates a gap between what we hear and what we see. But the brain is always trying to connect image and sound and to give it a sense. I am very interested in these gaps, which create a shift in our understanding process.

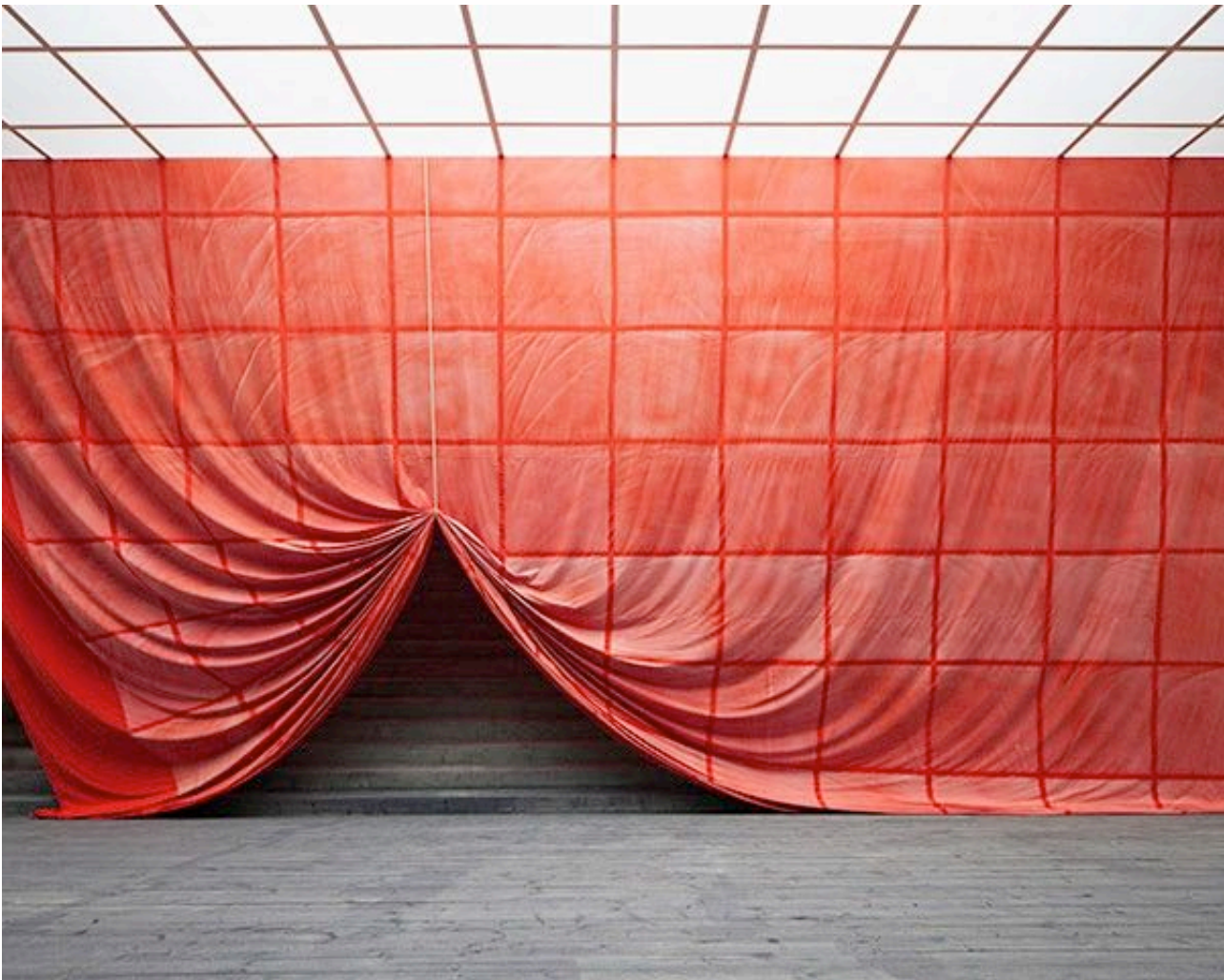
You rightly refer to the aspect of performance and therefore to the relation with real time, even though it is prerecorded. This time dimension is also present in other ways, with images that seem to recall a past which could be recent or more distant, it's not very clear...

It's helpful for me to move outside time and then play with props from various periods. My films are more about an historical perspective than about the past. The time is undefined, but it is located within history. It is my way of creating a distance between the here-and-now and the time and space of the film. This is reinforced by filming exclusively in black and white. For me, this distance functions as a sort of void, which can be filled with as-yet-unthought or undreamed-of images, or with images that are more likely to be found in the realms of the unconscious.

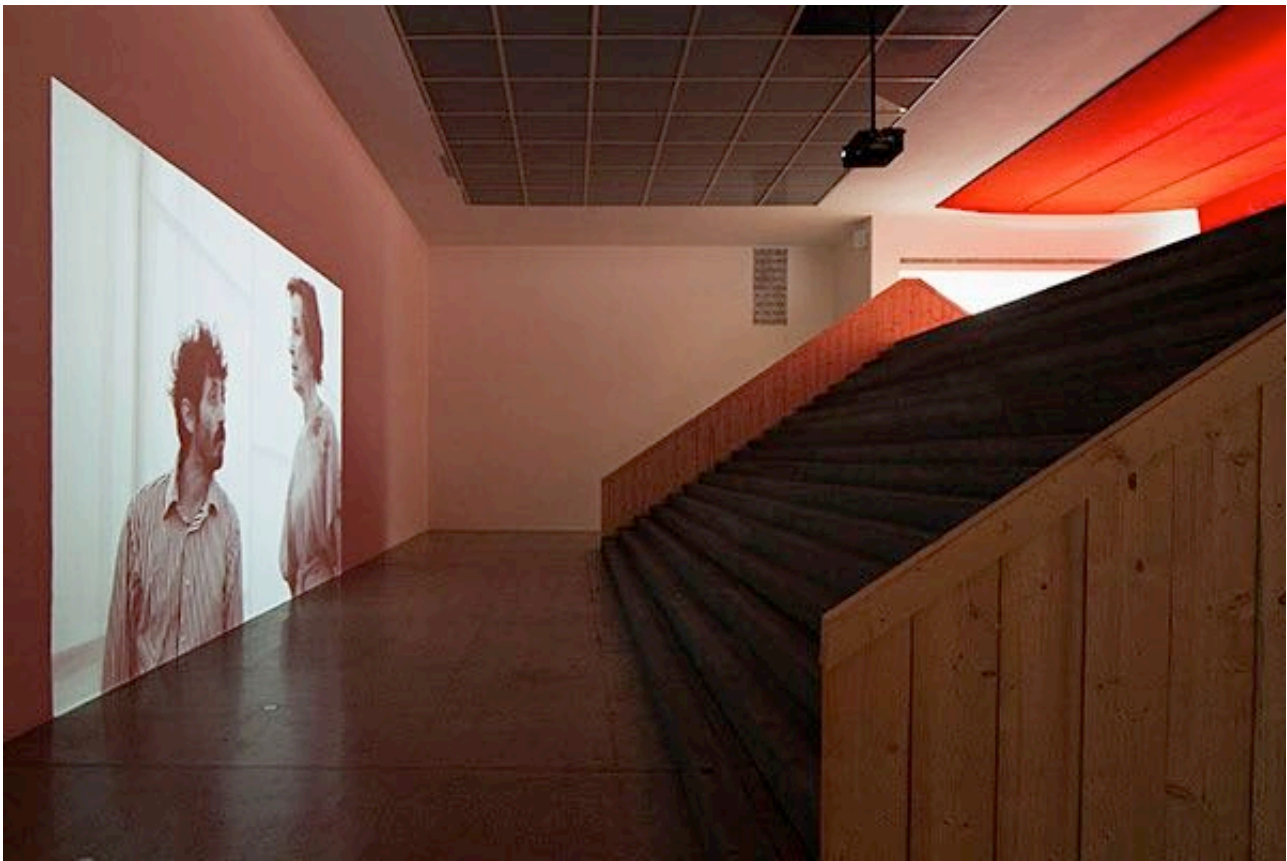
(Ulla von Brandenburg interviewed by Xavier Franceschi)

[at Secession, Wien](#)

until 10 November 2013







Ulla von Brandenburg, "Innen ist nicht Außen" installation view at Secession, Wien, 2013.

Photo: Wolfgang Thaler.