

**Yuko Hasegawa: *New Sensorium* –
*Exiting from the Failures of
Modernization***

Interview by Mylène Ferrand Lointier

Yuko Hasegawa, could you please introduce us to your exhibition at ZKM and tell us about the differences with the one by Bruno Latour?

My exhibition ‘New Sensorium’ is critical to the logocentrism and anthropocentrism of many popular exhibitions. The world has been changing a lot and to return to an archival mode of presentation is a too simple idea in my opinion. If you happen to walk into art exhibitions, you will find that archival exhibitions require a completely different kind of interpretation and distance. When we look at what happened at ZKM, all exhibitions have the same format, same museography, same kind of information material. This kind of interface is very monotonous as I see it. That’s why I wanted to do something different. At the same time, I’m also against the idea that ‘New Sensorium’ is a compensation for a lack, or a “correspondent” to existing alternatives.

Does this mean that already before seeing ‘Reset

Modernity!', you knew the direction Bruno Latour would take?

Yes, because of his position as a philosopher, as the person who writes books. I have seen different exhibitions by philosophers like Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard etc., and all are based on photography and text. But an exhibition is not only about putting things in 2D or 3D. An exhibition is about manifesting some kind of experience. That's why I explain my exhibition as a journey.

How did you select the artists and works?

I made four kinds of chapters and thought about the idea of artists proposing new ecologies, new environments, instead of resetting old ones. Secondly, I thought about materials that could be leading objects bringing a new kind of future. Thirdly, a new materiality and a new kind of physicality, also a new kind of sensation. Fourthly, I thought about transcendent, homely, existing art forms leading to something new, and not traditional forms. These are the main themes.

Could you please tell us something about what Bruno Latour pointed out: the fact that speaking about globality does not necessarily mean showing big and interactive installations?

His remark comes very much from a conceptor and is based on the metaphysical. I am a practitioner and for me, it's very important to make a kind of stage set. In the big courtyard I put one piece which is totally on physicality and one which is totally different.

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You mentioned anthropocentrism before, so how do you address the non-human world in 'New Sensorium'?

Human and non-human is the same. You can see this in the show's materiality, gravity, performance. All this has nothing to do with human beings. We just happen to attribute some kind of meaning to it, based on our own limited perception. The material is the performance. A second piece, 'Paranoiapp' (2015), by Valia Fetisov, Nicolay Spesivtsev and Dzina Zhuk, demonstrates how the work fundamentally is a matter of the digital cameras' scanning process, and hence a kind of conjugation and integration between a human perception and the "machinery's perception". This is a particular kind of moment focusing on the gaze and on a certain spectacularity: that this kind of picture taken by a machine gives us exciting moments. This is also interaction. For example, if a woman has a gun, she becomes a woman with a gun, different from a woman without a gun. At such a moment, we are totally hybrid, a new kind of creature. The gun is not only an instrument, it's been created partly as a presence. The human and the non-human perception are overlapped and have to be conjugated.

Is this your definition of animism?

Animism has nothing to do with specierism. Animism is a new animism.

What about the link Art/Ecology?

We have to forget what a human being is. Human beings make decisions and balances. Ecology, however, is a question of *for what, and for whom?* Bacterias and virus are also part of the ecology, we have to start thinking about them as equivalent platforms to ours. Ecology is too much thinking from a human being point of view, from a utilitarian perspective.

In the show of Bruno Latour, some artists are also activists. What do you think of this?

Activists use aesthetics to make their presentations, while artists have different skills to do research and to transform the environment. As a curator, I am able to display them together. But from the art's point of view, their definitions are completely and necessarily different. Art can be a part of different histories; of art, aesthetics, culture, philosophy, means, etc. Only art, however, can remain in art history, understood as a surviving history that is based on people's decisions over their legacy, and that is to be preserved as an essential part of their culture. There is a very strong competition to survive in art history. It's not constituted by pop-up actions, and in that sense, the history of art is not history. Rather, the specific richness of art consists in the successors' reappropriations as a matter of qualified learning from (art) history.

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So what is your definition of art?

Art could be an amazing activity made by human beings that transform their consciousness into forms. In the process of creating art, you can include non-human beings as animals, you can utilize other kinds of instruments but art is only defined by human beings. It is never shared by other beings. I am also very much interested in cultural geography and how to activate new types of cities. One of the ideas I am exploring at the moment is about how knowledge is connected to the body's memories and also how it reflects the relations between people as bodies, and links them all to each other.

For you, is Modernity something that needs to be entirely thrown away?

Modernity is still here, she's continuing. Modernity is not dead.

But what I appreciate in Bruno Latour's books and what was really inspiring for me is how he criticized the Western subject/object dualism, and that he approaches a non-anthropological research in the history of sciences. I am very much interested in the sciences too, not as a specialist, but as a human being looking for progress.

What about the "post-human", following Rosi Braidotti's idea of an enlarging interconnection between self and

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others, including non-humans?

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The “post-human” is in fact very much linked to ancient people, it’s coming from our very origins. We’re hybrids, also with animals, because of the reincarnation. The idea of cyborg, that you can see in the Japanese manga *Ghost in the Shell* by Masamune Shirow (1995). Our bodies are just shells. We are hybrids ghosts made of brain and soul.

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