



TATIANA TROUVE

A Rock Band a Hard Place

She's interested in 'what the gaze cannot penetrate', but where exactly does that leave the Italian artist's viewers?

words VIOLAINE BOUTET DE MONVEL

AT LAST YEAR'S VENICE BIENNALE, Tatiana Trouvé initiated a series of elevators (*Expansion of a Closure – Step 0, 2007–*) whose doors are designed to shut so slowly that it would actually take ten years to finally see them closed. Since there is no machine that can actually carry out the lengthy process, the artist plans to exhibit a new elevator every year until the doors are shut. The second elevator (*Step 1*) was exhibited at Villa Arson in Nice last winter. As the artist remarked in a recent interview at her Paris studio: "There are things that cannot exist within an exhibition frame. To inhabit a place, a world, you must first appropriate it mentally. To inhabit an exhibition is not about the time you spend in it or the time it lasts, but about the time you can spare to mentally constitute yourself within it. The unconscious has no temporality. The inhabitants of my architectures are you, the visitors." Indeed, the transformative quality of material and time is a constant preoccupation in Trouvé's work.

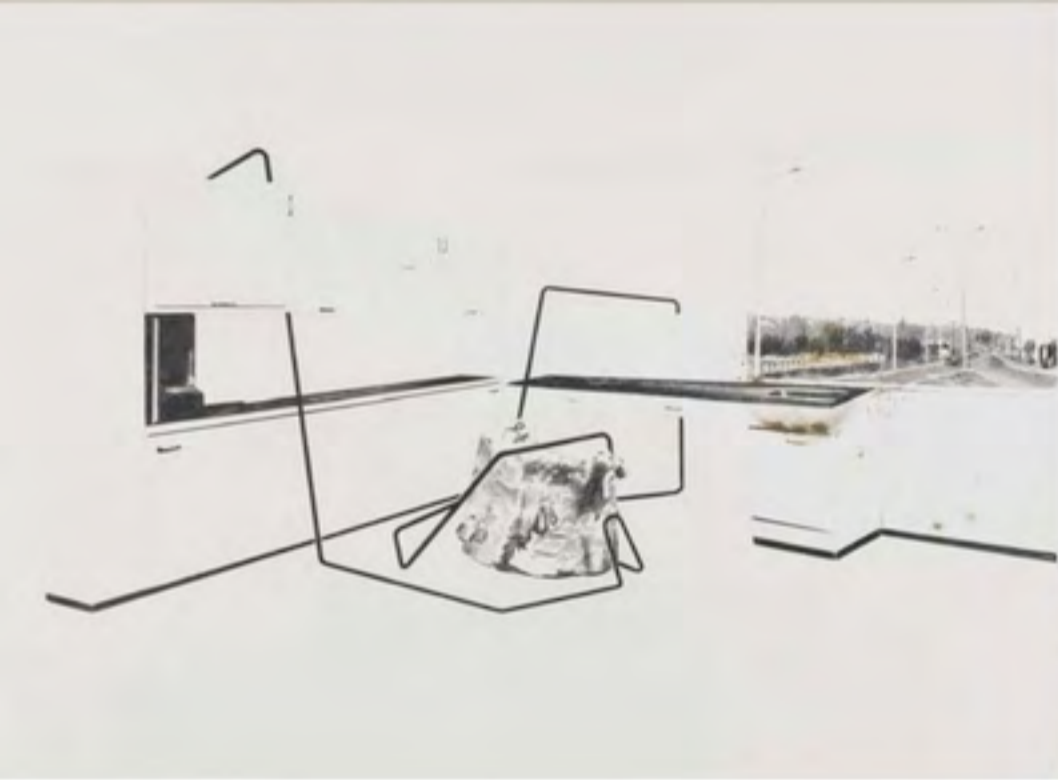
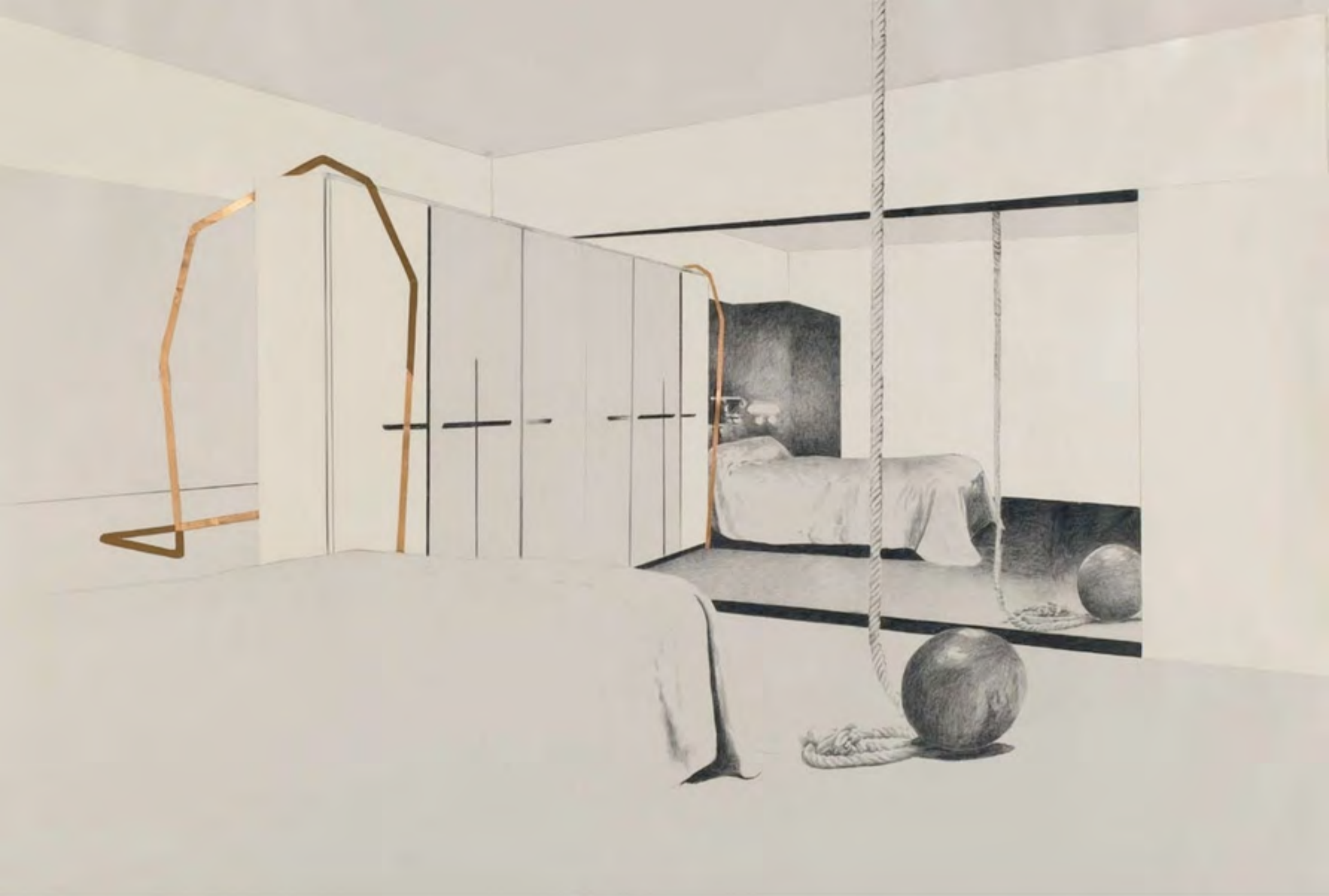
The Italian artist spent her childhood in Dakar and later studied at the prestigious art school of Villa Arson, gaining notoriety over the past ten years with her evolving architectural ensemble *Bureau d'Activités Implicites* (*Bureau of Implicit Activities, or BAI*). Initiated in 1997, this series has grown into a dozen cubicles furnished with office appliances and filing cabinets. Described by Trouvé as modules, they offer a fanciful and disorienting alternative to office life, suggesting activities without any material product or advantage. While mimicking the tendency of bureaucracies to compartmentalise, the various modules are like shells protecting and revealing Trouvé's early artistic existence – a time when she was, to put it bluntly, unable to get exhibited. Indeed, this series was originally inspired by the difficulties Trouvé experienced with the French administration at the beginning of her career in Paris, where artists are expected to do a lot of form-filling in pursuit of funding from the state. Rather than treating these tasks as a sign of failure, the artist used them to initiate the *BAI*. For instance, in the 'administrative module' one encounters meticulously filed rejection letters received by Trouvé when looking for a job on her arrival in Paris in the early 1990s. It's a process that enables her to transform lost or wasted time, allowing it to unfold into a contemplative dimension. (The title of her 2007 show at Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin in Miami, *Time Snares*, neatly captures Trouvé's double-edged relationship to endurance.) Similarly, the numerous 'waiting modules' that punctuate a visit to the *BAI* are spaces dedicated to introspection, where the viewer is left to herself, physically halted. It seems that even hanging around in a bus station can be turned into a productive experience by Trouvé, as evidenced by a waiting-module sound installation, developed from a recording of this prosaic place of pause. She has even edited together these various recordings, effectively composing her own private work of Muzac.

From the residues and scraps of this expanding, personal architecture another type of installation, the *Polder*, was raised. A polder, coming from a Dutch word, is a tract of lowland reclaimed from the sea. In Trouvé's world, they are installations that invade the exhibition spaces beyond the *BAI* – although her first *Polders* were actually kept within its archives: miniature architectural models that reconstructed from memory sites that the artist had visited. Passing through all the





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deformations of recollection, the results were completely different from their origins. Sculptural representations of common objects (like chairs, tables, lamps, doors or exercise equipment), the *Polders* disorient the viewer because of their reduced size – suggesting mysterious uses or dreamlike experiences – or because their original function is rendered negligible, or simply because they are out of reach, enclosed behind glass in their own room within the gallery.

This notion of a skewed doubling, of alternative versions of the real world, is crucial to Trouvé's practice, delineated by the concept of the 'double bind' – the title of her 2007 solo show at Palais de Tokyo. Her installations are bound by, knotted within and trapped between two dimensions: the dimension of the actual exhibition space and the dimension of the mysterious worlds and activities suggested by the pieces. It is the gap between two spaces, or dimensions, where the viewer's imagination can finally move unrestrained.

Little by little, her *Polder* microarchitectures have become autonomous, emerging from the archives to invade every nook and cranny of the exhibition space, and often suggesting hidden space beyond, whether in light emanating from *Alice in Wonderland*-style doors too small to enter or in numerous tubes stretching from floor to ceiling, a mysterious skeleton of the exhibition space, a fictive architectural structure. "I am interested in what the gaze cannot penetrate. For me, it is not that far from my 'implicit activities,' which don't necessarily end up in a form of production," Trouvé says. The scale of her *Polders* has changed considerably over time, and they have finally taken over from her *BAI*. "It's got to the point that I don't know if they're still *Polders*. They've changed so much, like a bundle of molecules that develops and propagates itself in contact with certain substances. We don't know what it becomes. This is what happened to the *Polders*." Similarly, Trouvé's drawings, which were originally architectural projects filed in the *BAI* archives with the early *Polders*, have become independent pieces of work. Indeed her current output has lost evident autobiographical reference.

In 2007 Trouvé was awarded the annual Marcel Duchamp Prize, and the resulting solo exhibition opens at the Pompidou Centre this month, while a further solo exhibition is currently on show at Johann König, in Berlin. At the time of writing, the artist is planning to fill the Pompidou's Espace 315 with sculptures that echo architectural units seen in drawings on the walls. In the entrance visitors will be tricked by a *trompe l'œil* installation created by invisible mirrors, which show an illusion of the main room, while in the actual main room, a doubled installation of sand continuously flowing from the ceiling will suggest a hidden space whose slow emptying will give shape to variable, ever-changing 'sculptures' (two mountains of black sand that will grow night and day until the end of the show). "The idea is that the fourth dimension of time is stuck between the second dimension of drawing and the third of architecture and sculpture," says Trouvé. "All the forms to be shown in the exhibition will be the prisoners of a dimension that is not their own." ■

Tatiana Trouvé's Marcel Duchamp Prize exhibition is at the Pompidou Centre, Paris, from 25 June to 29 September. Her solo exhibition Density of Time is at Johann König, Berlin, until 14 June. See listings for further details



WORDS
(IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

Aujourd'hui, hier, ou il y a longtemps... 2005

(Installation view, CAPC, Bordeaux)

Photo Marc Durangé

Polder 2005

resin, metal, painted copper, dimensions variable
(Photo André Flou: Collection Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris)

Installation view, Villa Arson, Nice 2007

Untitled 2007

(Installation view, Venice Biennale 2007)

mixed media, dimensions variable

Photo Clotilde Benzi

Untitled (from the series *Intemporalité*) 2007

printed on paper, 100 x 100 cm, 70 x 70 cm

Photo Marc Durangé

Untitled (from the series *Intemporalité*) 2007

printed on paper, 100 x 100 cm, 70 x 70 cm

Photo Marc Durangé

Untitled (from the series *Remonances*) 2008

pen and ink on paper, 60 x 37 x 57 cm

Photo Marc Durangé

All images

Courtesy Galerie Adrien Reeb, Brussels; Galerie Emmanuel Permay, Maastricht; and Galerie Johann König, Berlin