

art press

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EXPOSITIONS REVIEWS

PARIS

Anouk Kruithof

Galerie Valeria Cetraro / 13 mars - 12 juin 2021

Entre 2018 et 2020, après avoir papillonné entre les capitales internationales de l'art contemporain, Anouk Kruithof (Pays-Bas, 1981) s'est posée à Botopasi. Dans ce village au cœur de la jungle du Suriname, petit pays du nord de l'Amérique du Sud, il n'y a d'électricité que trois heures par jour. Pourtant, constate-t-elle, ces maisons traditionnelles en bois n'en abritent pas moins des écrans LCD. Ainsi, dans un contexte des plus différents, source pour l'artiste d'une expérience inédite et transformatrice au contact de la nature, Kruithof retrouvait la thématique de la technologie, de ses pouvoirs et de ses limites, qui est l'un des axes de son œuvre protéiforme. Elle en a tiré l'exposition *Trans Human Nature* dont le titre, contraction de « transhumanisme » et de « nature humaine », la place sous le signe du paradoxe.

L'exposition repose, en effet, sur la rencontre de l'artifice et de la nature. Le sol de la galerie est recouvert d'herbe factice tandis que des fragments de mannequins en Plexiglas sont répartis dans l'espace. D'habitude, ces derniers servent à présenter vêtements ou accessoires mais là, comme ils sont eux-mêmes sur des présentoirs, ils semblent vouloir vendre une humanité synthétique, transparente et lisse. Aux murs, au contraire, de grandes photographies imprimées sur papier peint offrent des gros plans sur la jungle du Suriname à l'état brut : les veines d'une roche ou les nervures d'une feuille de cette végétation luxuriante.

Des photographies encadrées organisent quant à elles cette rencontre à l'intérieur des images en plongeant dans les éléments naturels une iconographie robotique et futuriste acquise par Kruithof sur des banques de stock. Elles ne sont pas le fruit de montages numériques mais celui de mélanges in situ à partir d'images de corps synthétiques tirées sur textiles ou plastiques et découpées. Au fond de l'eau, un masque prend des allures de vestige archéologique. Ailleurs, des feuilles recouvertes de spores font une élégante coiffure à un visage de robot. Plus loin, un droïde coupé en lanières ondule au rythme des feuilles avec lesquelles il est mêlé.

On le voit, *Trans Human Nature* entend lever les contradictions que contenait son titre pour, à distance de tout fétichisme transhumaniste ou écologique, réconcilier technologie et nature. Mais l'exposition semble être le cadre d'une autre réconcilia-

tion, celle de l'artiste avec la photographie. En effet, ces dernières années, outre des installations vidéo comme *Universal Tongue* (2018) qui diffuse 32 heures de vidéos de mille danses différentes sur huit écrans, Kruithof a notamment montré des sculptures photographiques dans lesquelles l'image fixe perdait toute fonction descriptive. Ici, c'est le contraire. Comme si, après plusieurs années d'engouement pour l'objet photographique et la spatialisation de l'image, les artistes qui, comme Kruithof, s'étaient montrés les plus novateurs dans ces recherches voulaient renouer avec le pouvoir de représentation de la photographie et le plaisir visuel qu'il procure.

Étienne Hatt

Between 2018 and 2020, after having flitted among the international capitals of contemporary art, Anouk Kruithof (Netherlands, b. 1981) settled in Botopasi. In this village in the heart of the jungle of Suriname, a little country in the north of South America, there is only electricity for three hours a day. Yet, she notes, these traditional wooden houses nevertheless house LCD screens.

In this way, in a very different context, the source of a new and transforming experience for the artist in contact with nature, Kruithof has returned to the theme of technology, its powers and its limits, which is one of the axes of her protean work. The title of the exhibition, a contraction of "transhumanism" and "human nature", places it in the category of paradox.

The exhibition is indeed based on the meeting of artifice and nature. The floor of the gallery is covered with artificial grass, while fragments of Plexiglas mannequins are strewn around the space. Usually these are used to display clothes or accessories, but here, as they are themselves on display, they seem to be trying to sell a synthetic, transparent, smooth humanity. On the walls, by contrast, large photographs printed on wallpaper offer close-ups of the Surinamese jungle in its natural state. Here the veins of a rock, there the ribs of a leaf of this luxuriant vegetation.

As for the framed photographs, they organise this encounter within the images by plunging into the natural elements a robotic, futuristic iconography acquired by Kruithof from stock banks. They aren't the result of digital montages, but of in-situ combinations of images of synthetic bodies printed on textiles or plastics and cut out. Under water, a mask takes on

the appearance of an archaeological relic. Elsewhere, leaves covered in spores make an elegant hairdo for a robot face. Further on, a droid cut into strips undulates to the rhythm of the leaves with which it is mixed.

As we can see, *Trans Human Nature* intends to remove the contradictions contained in its title and, at a distance from any transhumanist or ecological fetishism, reconciling technology and nature. But the exhibition seems to be the framework for another reconciliation, that of the artist with photography. Indeed, in recent years, in addition to video installations such as *Universal Tongue* (2018), which broadcasts 32 hours of videos of a thousand different dances on eight screens, Kruithof has notably shown photographic sculptures in which the still image loses all descriptive function. Here the opposite is true. It is as if, after several years of infatuation with the photographic object and the spatialisation of the image, the artists who, like Kruithof, had shown themselves to be the most innovative in this research, wanted to reconnect with the representational power of photography, and the visual pleasure it provides.

Anouk Kruithof. «Trans Human Nature». Vue de l'exposition/exhibition view. (Ph. Niccolo Quaresima)



Between 2018 and 2020, after having flitted among the international capitals of contemporary art, Anouk Kruithof (Netherlands, b. 1981) settled in Botopasi. In this village in the heart of the jungle of Suriname, a little country in the north of South America, there is only electricity for three hours a day. Yet, she notes, these traditional wooden houses nevertheless house LCD screens. In this way, in a very different context, the source of a new and transforming experience for the artist in contact with nature, Kruithof has returned to the theme of technology, its powers and its limits, which is one of the axes of her protean work. The title of the exhibition, a contraction of “transhumanism” and “human nature”, places it in the category of paradox. The exhibition is indeed based on the meeting of artifice and nature. The floor of the gallery is covered with artificial grass, while fragments of Plexiglas mannequins are strewn around the space. Usually these are used to display clothes or accessories, but here, as they are themselves on display, they seem to be trying to sell a synthetic, transparent, smooth humanity. On the walls, by contrast, large photographs printed on wallpaper offer close-ups of the Surinamese jungle in its natural state. Here the veins of a rock, there the ribs of a leaf of this luxuriant vegetation. As for the framed photographs, they organise this encounter within the images by plunging into the natural elements a robotic, futuristic iconography acquired by Kruithof from stock banks. They aren’t the result of digital montages, but of in-situ combinations of images of synthetic bodies printed on textiles or plastics and cut out. Under water, a mask takes on the appearance of an archaeological relic. Elsewhere, leaves covered in spores make an elegant hairdo for a robot face. Further on, a droid cut into strips undulates to the rhythm of the leaves with which it is mixed. As we can see, Trans Human Nature intends to remove the contradictions contained in its title and, at a distance from any transhumanist or ecological fetishism, reconciling technology and nature. But the exhibition seems to be the framework for another reconciliation, that of the artist with photography. Indeed, in recent years, in addition to video installations such as Universal Tongue (2018), which broadcasts 32 hours of videos of a thousand different dances on eight screens, Kruithof has notably shown photographic sculptures in which the still image loses all descriptive function. Here the opposite is true. It is as if, after several years of infatuation with the photographic object and the spatialisation of the image, the artists who, like Kruithof, had shown themselves to be the most innovative in this research, wanted to reconnect with the representational power of photography, and the visual pleasure it provides.

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