

PARACHUTE

art contemporary
contemporary art



January
March
May
July
September
November
December
2000

93



PARACHUTE

revue d'art contemporain / contemporary art magazine

PARACHUTE, REVUE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN INC.
ÉDITIONS PARACHUTE PUBLICATIONS

conseil d'administration / board of directors:

JEAN-PIERRE GRÉMY président du conseil / chairman

CHANTAL PONTBRIAND présidente directrice générale / president

COLETTE TOUGAS secrétaire-trésorière / secretary treasurer

CHARLES LAPOINTE président sortant / outgoing chairman

ROBERT HACKETT membre / member

rédaction, administration, abonnements /

editorial and administrative offices, subscriptions:

PARACHUTE, 4060, boul. Saint-Laurent, bureau 501, Montréal (Québec)
Canada H2W 1Y9 téléphone: (514) 842-9805

télécopieur / fax: (514) 842-9319 courriel/e-mail: parachut@citenet.net

Prière de ne pas envoyer de communiqués

par courriel/Please do not send press releases by e-mail.

publicité / advertising: (514) 842-9805

tarifs des abonnements / subscription rates:

UN AN / ONE YEAR – Canada (taxes comprises / tax included):

individu / individual 34\$ étudiant / student 26\$ institution 50\$

org. sans but lucratif / not for profit organization 42\$

à l'étranger / abroad: individu / individual 44\$ institution 60\$

DEUX ANS / TWO YEAR – Canada (taxes comprises / tax included):

individu / individual 57\$ étudiant / student 43\$

diffusion/distribution: Les Messageries de Presse Internationale Inc.,
4001, boul. Robert, Montréal, Québec, Canada H1Z 4H6, tél./

tel. (514) 374-9661, téléc./fax (514) 374-4742. Pour connaître le point

de vente le plus proche au Canada, composez le 1-800-463-3246,

et aux États-Unis, le 1-800-263-9661. / To find out the nearest

outlet in Canada, dial 1-800-463-3246, and in the U.S.,

1-800-263-9661. EUROPE: La Librairie du Québec, 30, rue Gay Lussac,

75005 Paris, tél. 01 43 54 49 02, téléc. 01 43 54 39 15.

PARACHUTE n'est pas responsable des documents qui lui sont adressés.

Les manuscrits ne sont pas retournés. La rédaction se réserve quatre mois suite à la

réception d'un texte pour informer l'auteur(e) de sa décision quant à sa publication.

Les articles publiés n'engagent que la responsabilité de leurs auteur(e)s. /

Manuscripts are not returned. Authors will be informed of the editor's decision

concerning publication within four months of receipt of text. The content of the

published articles is the sole responsibility of the author. Tous droits de reproduction

et de traduction réservés / All rights of reproduction and translation reserved

© PARACHUTE, revue d'art contemporain inc. PARACHUTE est indexé dans /

is indexed in: Art Bibliography Modern, BHA, Canadian Index, Information Access

Company (full text/texte intégral), Repère. PARACHUTE est membre de / is a

member of: Société de développement des périodiques culturels québécois, The

Canadian Magazine Publishers' Association, La Conférence canadienne des arts.

Dépôts légaux / Legal Deposits: Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, Bibliothèque

nationale du Canada. ISSN 0318-7020. PARACHUTE est une revue trimestrielle

publiée en janvier, avril, juin et octobre. / PARACHUTE is a quarterly published

in January, April, June, and October. Société canadienne des postes, Envoi

de publications canadiennes – Envoi de Poste-publications-Enregistrement

n°08995. Impression / Printer: Bowne de Montréal inc., Montréal. Imprimé

au Canada / Printed in Canada. 1^{er} trimestre 1999 / 1st trimester 1999.

PARACHUTE remercie de leur appui financier / thanks for their

financial support: le Conseil des Arts du Canada / The Canada

Council for the Arts, le Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec,

le Conseil des Arts de la Communauté urbaine de Montréal.

directrice de la publication / editor
CHANTAL PONTBRIAND

directrice adjointe / managing editor
COLETTE TOUGAS

adjoints à la rédaction / assistant editors
JIM DROBNICK, THÉRÈSE ST-GELAIS

rédacteur correspondant / contributing editor
VINCENT LAVOIE

collaborateurs / contributors

KEN ALLAN, JENNIFER ALLEN, OLIVIER ASSELIN,
MARILYN BURGESS, MURIEL CARON, INGRID CHU,
CHRISTINE CONLEY, PATRICE DUHAMEL, ROY EXLEY,
TOM FOLLAND, KATHLEEN GOGGIN, EMMANUEL HERMANGE,
PATRICIA KELLY, GERMAINE KOH, ANDRÉ LAMARRE,
VINCENT LAVOIE, ANDRÉ-LOUIS PARÉ, ANNIE POULIN,
BÉNÉDICTE RAMADE, ELLEN L. RAMSAY, CHARLES REEVE,
PIERRE ROBERT, JOEL DAVID ROBINSON, NANCY SHAW,
MICHAEL STONE-RICHARDS, MARINE VAN HOOF,
KATHRYN WALTER, JERRY WHITE,
STEPHEN WRIGHT, GER ZIELINSKI

abonnements, gestion / subscriptions, administration
KATHLEEN GOGGIN

graphisme / design
DOMINIQUE MOUSSEAU



A REFLEXION ON THE FRENCH AND AMERICAN PERCEPTION OF GUY DEBORD

Les moralistes, je les aime tous, particulièrement Vauvenargues et Sade. La morale est la grande conciliatrice. L'attaquer, c'est encore lui rendre hommage. C'est en elle que j'ai toujours trouvé mes principaux sujets d'exaltation.

— André Breton, *Les pas perdus* (1924).

At the very moment of what may seem the consecration of Guy Debord into the academy — 1989 saw the celebration of the twenty-first anniversary of 1968 and with it the republication in facsimile of nearly all the relevant documents, whilst just about every book worth publishing in 1998, the thirtieth anniversary of 1968, came bearing the legend, *achevé d'imprimer mai 1998*, thus making of a legal requirement a badge of honour — when more and more essays, special issues of journals and books are being devoted to Debord, there is a curious confusion, as though the proliferation of information is dispersing the bliss of ignorance. Debord, it must be said, has been fortunate in the quality of the writers, both in French and English, who have turned to him: David Harvey, Fredric Jameson, Martin Jay and T.J. Clark, just to name a few of those who have had something to say and who have been perfectly fluent with the intellectual traditions, French and German, into which Debord's *œuvre* must be situated. In the United Kingdom, certain departments of Urban Studies or Social Geography, notably in Birmingham and Newcastle, were among the first to explore the *analytic* potential of Debord's work, in stark contrast to the impressionistic use of famous passages branded as talismans not uncharacteristic of the Baudrillardian mold into which Debord's thought has subsequently been poured. Sadie Plant's *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age* (1992), the first booklength study in English, is in many ways the encounter of this analytic tradition and the fine work of Peter Wollen, "Bitter Victory: The Art and Politics of the Situationist International"

(*New Left Review*, 1989), which so ably situated the European political and intellectual tradition of the Situationist International for a generation. Amongst the French, not a day goes by that does not see a new recruit, a process begun in Debord's lifetime and which led Debord, in 1975, to make a film on the reception of his film of *La Société du spectacle* (1973), namely, *Réfutation de tous les jugements, tant élogieux qu'hostiles, qui ont été jusqu'ici portés sur le film La Société du spectacle* (1975); an exercise repeated, this time in book form, after the release of what would be his final film *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni* (1978) with the publication of *Ordures et décombres déballés à la sortie du film In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni par différentes sources autorisées* (1982). That Debord was always sensitive to the duplicitousness of praise — after all a commonplace in the tradition of moral reflexion in which Debord was well versed — is clear when, even Régis Debray, to whom the rôle of fall guy so frequently falls, is taken to task as an illiterate when, at the time of the assassination of Gérard Lebovici, there were insidious rumours that Debord might have had some involvement in his friend's demise and Debray had the decency to reject out of hand such a possibility. The line-up in France is by no means uninteresting: Philippe Sollers, Michel Surya (biographer of Bataille) and Michel Löwy. Amongst the finest perceptions, Debord is admired both for having developed a telling critique of the late stage of capitalism as codified in his book *La Société du spectacle* (1967), and for the possession of what many consider the finest writing of his generation — Debord the stylist — which together make of Debord a serious French moralist. The current pantheonization of Debord has led to two contested tendencies, both unsurprising: first, to separate Debord from his *compagnons de route* in the Situationist International, and, secondly,

to give in to the seduction of Debord the stylist of the French language, the avant-gardist with a mastery of classical diction.

All the world is a stage, we know from Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (*Comme il vous plaira*). Upon hearing Orlando speak of aiding someone "oppressed with two weak evils, age and hunger," the Duke, banished to the Forest of Arden, turns to Jacques, his holy fool, and triumphantly declares, "Thou seest, we are not all alone unhappy:/This wide and universal Theater/Presents more woeful Pageants than the Scene/Wherein we play in," which verses become in French, "*Tu vois que nous ne sommes pas les seuls malheureux; ce vaste théâtre offre de plus douloureux spectacles que la scène où nous figurons*" (Act II, sc. vii), and the transformation avails itself of the powerful ordinariness of the word *spectacle* whilst drawing upon the adjacent energies of moral contractions long attached, in the protestantization that is modernity, to the concept of theatricality: the world as appearance, as seeming, as lack, as, indeed, illusion. Rousseau, no less than the French moralists so greatly admired by Nietzsche, exploited the metaphorical possibilities of the chain of everyday associations readily evoked by *spectacle* and its cognates. We all think in terms of the spectacle because we all live under its reign. We think the spectacle because we live in a postmodernist condition — or so it is said. We think the meaning of the spectacle because the trenchant insistency of Debord's analysis of the phenomenology of appearance under the late stage of capitalism was acute and, what good fortune, was presented in a style of elegant prose nearing the classical, though always passionate, always lucid. Debord was a passionate thinker who lived an ethical project in search of its necessary political correlative without which the claims of liberty would be meaningless.

The context of emergence of the figure of Guy-Ernest Debord (1936-1994) could not have been more overdetermined. Not formally educated beyond the Bacc. when, as many would still say, that qualification meant something, Debord, since his encounter in April 1951 with the Lettriste Movement led

by the Romanian Isidore Isou, lived his life as a *project*. Lettrisme was a movement of a synthetic and critical nature, at once highly intelligent and synthesizing of Futurism, Dada, Surrealism, yet supremely confident — the rhetoric of avant-garde self-presentation requires it as also its cult of *la jeunesse* — that it would be the summation of the avant-garde telos. Lettrisme, whatever one might think of its rhetorical bombast, was a far from negligible movement. It not only understood, long before fashion consecrated the matter, the historic importance of the sound experiments of the early avant-garde, but, in a way that could not have been more different from the intellectualism of a Valéry, it understood the necessity of relation between the letter/sound unit and the organization of economy. The baroque political economy of Lettrisme is not, assuredly, so very far from the economy of moving desire of a Deleuze. Here, indeed, we can begin to grasp what mattered for Debord. The split from Isou and the Lettristes by Debord and his friends (Gil J. Wolman, Serge Berna, Jean-Louis Brau) to form an Internationale Lettriste Movement in 1952 had less to do with the protest against Charlie Chaplin, the issue had to do with rigour: intellectual, political and ethical rigour. Debord, in many ways, shared the sense of totality that characterized the Lettriste movement, but he saw more clearly the need to develop a working account of the way in which capitalist economy distorted the free movement of desire. In order to do this, his large intellectual culture would be brought to bear, in a systematic way, on the city as the organizing category of modernity in its industrial phase. Not then nor ever would Debord allow himself to be tempted by Freudianism: he has nothing to say about the unconscious, and he has nothing to say about repression, but he has a great deal, and much of it of singular passion and insight, to say about distortion: of expression, of psychic movement, of value, of violence, and, above all, of temporality, for in no other sphere does Debord situate or attribute as much value to what it is to be, to live than in the sphere of time. From its incep-

tion, effectively with the “*Rapport sur la construction des situations*”¹ in 1957, the experience of time, a veritable passion of time, has been the unremitting register of Debord’s critique of late capitalism: in the section “*Vers une internationale situationniste*” that sets out the parameters of the situationist project – the construction of situations, unitary urbanism, psychogeography – Debord, with a telling simplicity, says that

Le principal drame affectif de la vie, après le conflit perpétuel entre le désir et la réalité hostile au désir, semble bien être la sensation de l’écoulement du temps. L’attitude situationniste consiste à miser sur la fuite du temps, contrairement aux procédés esthétiques qui tendaient à la fixation de l’émotion.

In everything that Debord does thereafter, whether in film – especially *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni* (1978) – in *détournement* (the Situationist development of photomontage) – here, without doubt the most important work is *Mémoires* (1957/59) – or in the theoretical works, the crime of capitalism, of society under the spectacle, is the loss of time. In more than one place, Debord draws upon the descriptions of psychopathology to give imagery to the tragedy, the waste (*déchets*) of the loss of time in “*ce mouvement essentiel du spectacle, qui consiste à reprendre en lui tout ce qui existait dans l’activité humaine à l’état fluide, pour le posséder à l’état coagulé, en tant que choses qui sont devenues la valeur exclusive par leur formulation en négatif de la valeur vécue*” (Thesis 35). In order to turn subjects of liberty into producers, nothing less than the “*expropriation violente de leur temps*” (Thesis 159) was necessary. To the extent that late capitalism is co-extensive with modernity, then the time of capitalism becomes the time of the world (as representation): “*Avec le développement du capitalisme, le temps irréversible est unifié mondialement. L’histoire universelle devient une réalité, car le monde entier est rassemblé sous le développement de ce temps*” (Thesis 145). The powers of transformation required for such sustained expansion – in effect a convergence thesis of modern global industrialism – necessitates a recourse to the language of Hegel in order to capture one of the great problematics of the nineteenth-

century, namely, *the movement from the quantitative to the qualitative*, for this is the meaning of that thesis quoted beyond repetition into banality and emptiness: “*Le spectacle est le capital à un tel degré d’accumulation qu’il devient l’image*” (Thesis 34). In the movement capable of transforming quantity into quality in this sphere there is a loss – and more and more Debord will come to see this as an irreparable loss:

La perte de la qualité, si évidente à tous les niveaux du langage spectaculaire, des objets qu’il loue et des conduites qu’il règle, ne fait que traduire les caractères fondamentaux de la production réelle qui écarte la réalité: la forme-marchandise est de part en part l’égalité à soi-même, la catégorie du quantitatif. C’est le quantitatif qu’elle développe, et elle ne peut se développer qu’en lui (Thesis 38).

Here we encounter the structural basis of the unyielding language of pessimism that will become characteristic of Debord and which certain people find so difficult to stomach; thus for one admirer this aspect of Debord is nothing but “[une] *pose ennuyeuse et combien maladroite du mémorialiste fatigué et pessimiste*,”² whilst in the recent issue of *October* devoted to Debord and the S.I., we are told that Debord and his colleagues are not to be treated as “timeless ‘classics’ of a melancholic pessimism, but as figures centrally engaged in the cultural politics of their time.”³ “Of course, [we are informed] Debord himself must share some of the responsibility for this characterization [for] the effort to cast him as a moralist, as a lone voice of virtue and ethics in a corrupt world, goes far beyond what may properly be read into his work.” For this reason the special issue of *October* is posed “against the French reading of Debord as a late twentieth-century moralist” in favour of “a distinctly Anglo-Saxon American context,” and this in spite of the fact that “the English language literature on the Situationist International may be far from plentiful.”

Let us leave aside the perhaps surprising exhibition of national chauvinism in the pages of *October* and inquire of this aspect of Debord the moralist, the pessimist. The example of Blanqui alone would suffice to show that there is no contradiction between pessimism and a central engagement in the politics

of one’s time (let’s leave the *cultural* politics to the bureaucrats); even a casual reading of Lautréamont/Isidore Ducasse’s *Poésies*, pace Breton, pace Debord, would suffice to show the central importance of the French moralist tradition to a certain understanding of the experience of modernity and the origins of the avant-garde; a reading of Debord’s work, from beginning to end, shows that from adolescence he was fascinated by classical authors. A particularly telling page from the *Mémoires* bears détourned passages from Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and, above all Bossuet. The fascination with Bossuet dates from Debord’s early education and is well attested by his friends. It is not only the language of Bossuet that is a model, but the ethical movement. The *Mémoires* détournes a passage from Bossuet’s “*Oraison funèbre de Henriette d’Angleterre, en amassant des choses que le vent emporte*.” Now, the text that is the basis of Bossuet’s oration is none other than that biblical text that has so inflected the language of tenebrous despair which so disturbs certain of the admirers of Debord, particularly those in the academic branch of cultural studies who would reduce him to the thin figure of a precursor of the study of *visual culture*. Thus where Bossuet speaks of *Ecclesiastes* on useless wisdom, “*La sagesse dont il parle en ce lieu est cette sagesse insensée, ingénieuse à se tourmenter [qui] ne fait que se consumer inutilement en amassant des choses que le vent emporte*,”⁴ Debord, in his final film *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni*, will speak of the reigning ideology of the cinema in these terms:

Le cinéma dont je parle ici est cette imitation insensée d’une vie insensée, une représentation ingénieuse à ne rien dire, habile à tromper une heure l’ennui par le reflet du même ennui [qui] ne fait que se consumer inutilement en amassant des images que le temps emporte.

It would be possible to multiply these parallels many times. Why, then, the reluctance to recognize the power and significance of this aspect of Debord’s life and thinking? It would require far more space than is available to make the case with the subtlety that it deserves, but it can, I think, be clearly stated: what we are witnessing is a *contestation for the heritage of Debord and the Situationist project*, and in this con-

testation the issue is not only the understanding of the possibilities of the ethical against the extraordinary tendency to inflate the political to every sphere of value; equally at issue is that on which the difference between the so-called French view of Debord and the emerging American academic view hinges, namely, the rôle of Hegel, for it remains that the American reception has been dominated by a postmodernist cultural studies agenda that is decidedly not Hegelian in any meaningful sense, indeed, is anti-Hegelian. It remains, however, that Debord’s project was an ethics of temporality whose vocabulary was decidedly Hegelian. In a trenchant contribution, T.J. Clark and Donald Nicholson-Smith, former members of the S.I., make clear that they do not see Debord’s example as pointing “us back to some ludicrous Hegel revival.”⁵ They remind us that “by far the . . . the longest chapter [of *La Société du spectacle*] is entitled ‘The Proletariat as Subject and Representation.’” Indeed, this is so; but the proletariat dispossessed of its time is the wound to be comprehended to which end Debord devotes the chapters “*Temps et histoire*” and “*Le temps spectaculaire*” – a purely Hegelian anthropology of time. The translation into French of the first chapter of Lukács’ *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* only served to reinforce this tendency in Debord. Patrick Straram also developed a powerful aspect of this Hegelian anthropology so vital to Debord, namely, the possibility and meaning of dialogue for community. The variety of views available in French on Debord certainly do not ever speak of him in the quaint terms of visual culture; the question of style, even where it is raised as his virtue – that is, the means by which the reader is seduced – is never separate from the dimension of the ethical. Amongst the most serious accounts of Debord is the recent issue of Michel Surya’s journal *Lignes*.⁶ There we see, in its critical range, the “French” view: that Debord proposed a critical anthropology of experience under late capitalism. The terrain of this language could not but be Hegelian *qui s’inspire de tous les moralistes antiques* (Jean Hyppolite). Put in other words, Debord’s preoccupation was

not the celebration of revolutionary culture; rather he was obsessed with what Paul Ricoeur has tellingly characterized as the *enigma* of power. The language appropriate to this phenomenon has never approached the key of optimism.⁷

— MICHAEL STONE-RICHARDS

This reflexion draws upon a seminar presented by the author at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal, in April 1998. The author takes the liberty of dedicating this reflexion to Phyllis Lambert, quite simply.

NOTES

1. Cf. G.-E. Debord, "Rapport sur la construction des situations et sur les conditions de l'organisation et de l'action de la tendance situationniste internationale" [1957], reprinted in Gérard Berreby, ed., *Documents relatifs à la fondation de l'Internationale situationniste*, Paris: Éditions Alia, 1985, pp. 607-19.
2. Shigenobu Gonzalvez, *Guy Debord ou la beauté du négatif*, Paris: Éditions mille et une nuit, 1998, p. 57; for Gonzalvez' assessment of the English language reception of Debord, cf. p. 50.
3. Thomas F. McDonough, "Reading Debord, Rereading the Situationists," *October* #79, 1997, p. 5.

4. Bossuet, "Oraison funèbre de Henriette-Anne d'Angleterre," *Oraisons funèbres*, J. Truchet, ed., Paris: Garnier, 1961, pp. 175-76.
5. T.J. Clark and Donald Nicholson-Smith, "Why Art Can't Kill the Situationist International," *October* #79, 1997, n. 12, p. 24.
6. Cf. *Lignes* #31, May 1997, with contributions, amongst others, by Surya, Löwy and Francis Marmande.
7. Cf. the knowingly ambiguous article by Vincent Kaufmann in which he clearly realizes that he is not required to take the Situationist language at face value, but given the tradition that lends legibility to such language — "as if Situationism were a reincarnation of the preciosity of the French classical age" ("Angels of Purity," *October* #79, 1997, p. 62) — then the result might, indeed, just be "something that doubtless would be very beautiful."

Michael Stone-Richards is Assistant professor in twentieth-century European art in the Department of Art History at Northwestern University. In 1998, he was a Fellow at the Centre d'Étude at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, where he pursued research on Debord in the context of post-World War II urbanism and phenomenologies of space.

rapports entre l'art, l'esthétique, la science et la technologie, Couchot nous introduit au monde fascinant de la technoscience. La simulation est le cœur sensible de ce nouveau monde et l'interactivité en est son mode d'appropriation. Le réel, l'artificiel et le virtuel s'interpénètrent dans un dialogisme propre à la cybernétique. L'hybridation active entre l'énonciation, la transmission et la réception change profondément nos rapports à l'œuvre. Les exemples d'œuvres sont abondants. *Las Meninas* (1995) de Michael Tolson, par exemple, utilisera un programme informatique combinant des modèles de réseaux neuronaux et des algorithmes génétiques. Rien de moins.

Le sujet, dorénavant interfacé par ces multiples modèles technologiques, engage une nouvelle figure de la subjectivité. Le numérique, selon Edmond Couchot, réalise enfin le désir moderne d'une intersubjectivité pleine et entière, à la croisée du réel et du virtuel. P. R.

Mary Jane Jacob, Michael Brenson, eds., *Conversations at the Castle: Changing Audiences and Contemporary Art*, Cambridge, MA, London: MIT Press, 1998, 176 pp., ill. b. & w. & col.

Conversations at the Castle documents a project of the same name, organized by Mary Jane Jacob in the context of the Atlanta Arts Festival during the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games. "Conversation" was the theme and vehicle for the production of a series of artworks and events that creatively took on the challenge of representing contemporary art to a diversified public.

Artists' projects, personal accounts and theoretical texts outline the process of staging situations and seeking out audiences through face-to-face communications as well as Internet connections. Ideas were formed as they were discussed and subsequently translated into this book; they simultaneously problematize and corroborate a history of art practice that aims to find meaning through direct social interaction. One section is made up of texts that developed from conversations between civic, corporate and cultural characters who

converged around meals, prepared by the Italian artists known as Artway of Thinking, to forge new alliances and inspire interest in contemporary art practice at a time when funding for culture is slipping from the public agenda. Questions about community art, motivation, mediation and representation are critically and necessarily considered.

Homi Bhabha's contribution eloquently describes conversation as a creative process that seeks to transform the space between an artwork and its audience. Using the term "contextual contingency," he looks at meaning and value in an artwork as being shaped through encountering difference, confronting anxieties and working through contradictions. Conversation builds culture even as it remains in flux and provokes multiple interpretations. While this book represents a montage of ideas, it remains open to the question of how to represent a contemporary art history that is alive, active and continually changing. K. W.

John Knechtel, ed., *Alphabet City: Culture, Theory, Politics* #6, Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1998, 320 pp., ill. b. & w.

Inspired by Walter Benjamin and Asja Lacis' 1925 essay on Naples with its metaphoric use of the term "porosity," the most recent and ambitious edition of the annual *Alphabet City* takes as its central theme the notion of the "Open City" in its many facets, even nuanced in French, Portuguese and Greek tongues with quality translations alongside. The thirty-one contributions are richly diverse in sources and disciplines, including poets to architects to philosophers to artists.

While invoking Kafka and Valéry, among others, Jacques Derrida in his usual spry prose ponders Prague, its past, its potential in a "post-city age," the end of the polis, the status of minority non-Czechs, and so on. The poignant monologue to Michael Hoolboom's video *Positiv* explores the radically altered cityscape of one after having been diagnosed with HIV. The Toronto-based October Group of artists and architects documents here its anti-

LIVRES ET REVUES / BOOKS AND MAGAZINES

OUVRAGES THÉORIQUES / ESSAYS

Edmond Couchot, *La Technologie dans l'art. De la photographie à la réalité virtuelle*, Éditions Jacqueline Chambon, Nîmes, 1998, 269 p. (coll. rayon photo)

L'histoire de l'art œuvre en marge d'une interrogation systématique relativement à l'impact des technologies sur nos modes de perception. À l'instar d'Edmond Couchot, il faut bien reconnaître que les XIX^e et XX^e siècles cultivent d'abondance le monde artificiel des machines et des technologies scientifiques. Cet ouvrage, autant épris d'histoire de l'art que de technologie, nous convie à revisiter les idées établies.

Une première partie remonte l'histoire moderne de l'art, depuis la photographie, en privilégiant l'angle de la pression technesthésique. La vie artificielle, en s'infiltrant pro-

fondément dans nos mœurs, change significativement les perceptions et amène un déplacement marqué de la subjectivité. La représentation étant désormais uniformisée par la photographie, le cinéma et la télévision, l'art visuel s'oriente vers la présentation et même la sureprésentation. À titre d'exemple, le cubisme introduit des objets réels sur la surface peinte, Duchamp propose ses readymade (présentation), Rauschenberg crée ses *Combine Painting* (sureprésentation), Leo Steinberg introduit la notion de *Flat Bed* et ainsi de suite jusqu'au happening et à l'installation. Les raisonnements développés par l'auteur sont autant de pistes fécondes et convaincantes. Cette première partie vaut le livre à elle seule.

Dans la deuxième partie, l'art numérique est à l'honneur. Prolongeant ce regard lucide sur les