

Misunderstanding, alienation, incomprehension, aporia, confusion or misinterpretation, all these features or anomalies – whether discrete or continuous – constantly change the course and content of our exchanges, far from the Babylonian myth of a single universal language or the theories of correspondences, and more recently the postcolonial ideology of a flawless translation made possible by computer technology, the quest for an unproblematic communication has come down to us throughout the ages.

Four years after the exhibition *Transposition*¹, the Contemporary art center La Villa Arson is once again exploring the relation between art and communication in an exhibition entitled *DOUBLE BIND/STOP TRAP TO L'APPÊL À L'ART*. This time the aim is to examine the complexity of languages, which makes communication a unique understanding, constantly renewed through interpretation and creation.

The term "Double Bind" here refers to the "double bind" that, according to the philosopher Jacques Derrida, all translations call for as an imperative: the simultaneous necessity and impossibility, contained in every linguistic utterance, of the transposition from one language to another while an utterance necessarily requires recognition, understanding, and interpretation (its translatability). It also requires that one accept that which escapes interpretation, the untranslatable remainder that remains and which makes up its distinctive or unique character. Its idiom, the sentence "Stop, trying to understand me!" refers to the postmodernist Jacques Lacan's purported response, during one of his seminars, to a member of his audience, apparently desperate to grasp the meaning of each of Lacan's statements. He said, in this instance, a *double bind* as it was theorized by the anthropologist Gregory Bateson in the 1950s: the recipient of such an order is unable to respond without disobeying it at the same time, and is thus faced with dilemma and uncertainty.

The works presented in this exhibition exhibit diverse strategies of transposition that play with the alterations and distortions that occur in the construction and sharing of meaning, whether it be either discovered in the movement from one language to another, from one medium or technology to another, or, for example, in various types of translation, etc. In this way, the exhibition attempts to a conception of art that is opposed to the ideal of immediacy and transparency of thought – each work asserting, in its own way, the discrepancy between sign and referent, sense and meaning, as an element inherent to language. Translation is thus understood here as the broad sense of the term, as referring not to a mere tool for inter-linguistic transmission, but to a formal process – added as a creative means – in the conception and interpretation of the artwork.

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The works featured in the show testify to various strategies of transposition that take into account the alterations and distortions that occur in the construction and sharing of meaning, whether it be either discovered in the movement from one language to another, from one medium or technology to another, or, for example, in various types of translation, etc. In this way, the exhibition attempts to a conception of art that is opposed to the ideal of immediacy and transparency of thought – each work asserting, in its own way, the discrepancy between sign and referent, sense and meaning, as an element inherent to language. Translation is thus understood here as the broad sense of the term, as referring not to a mere tool for inter-linguistic transmission, but to a formal process – added as a creative means – in the conception and interpretation of the artwork.

Translation: Claire Benoit and Jean-Marie

¹ *Transposition*, organisée au Centre National d'Art Contemporain de la Villa Arson du 10 mars au 10 juin 2007, <http://www.villa-arson.org>.

² *Transposition*, held at the Centre National d'Art Contemporain de la Villa Arson from 10 March to 10 June 2007, <http://www.villa-arson.org>.

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