

Martine Feipel and Jean Bechameil  
*Melancholic dislocation*  
Cercle Cité, Luxembourg

Since 2008, Martine Feipel and Jean Bechameil have been creating works that the public is meant to walk through. Visiting one of their installations always involves experiencing a disruption in how we perceive things.

The artists started off designing distorted pieces of furniture, for example with *A thousand years*, before extending their skills to penetrable environments as when the artist duo represented Luxembourg at the 2011 Venice Biennale with *Cercle Fermé*. They continue to explore notions of time and space with their new installation, *Melancholic dislocation*, created for Cercle Cité. More than ever before, the time dimension comes to the fore here. The environment created by Martine Feipel and Jean Bechameil is a route marked out in several stages, so that the maze has a specific length of time. To make this effect work, the operated system devised reacts to the context in which it takes shape. This means that the geography of the place where the two artists' installations operate, as well as the history of the place, serve as their starting point.

However, the experiences that the artists offer us are never trivial. Even if someone visiting their installations is not alone, the artists succeed brilliantly in making them feel as if they are indeed alone with their experience: each individual inhabits space in a different way because each person makes sense of it in their own particular way. This expertise stems perhaps from the fact that Jean Bechameil has created many film sets, working in particular with Lars von Trier. The connection with the Luxembourg City Film Festival did not come about by chance.

The main feature of both artists' current work is also its whiteness. In Herman Melville's famous story *Moby Dick*, the author devotes an essay to the sea monster's absence of colour. In particular, he points out that although whiteness enhances the beauty of many things, when associated with any object of terror it exacerbates that terror. Our experience is amplified by the whiteness here. The absence of colour, through its neutrality, focuses our attention more sharply on the work's structure. The viewer is challenged, becoming all the more involved with the experience with which we are confronted. This whiteness owes much to the use of a unique material, similar to rubber, a secret known only to the artists, which bestows upon their work even greater individuality.

However, *Melancholic dislocation* marks a turning point in the work of these Luxembourg artists. Interacting with the exhibition space *the Ratskeller*, this new environment gives the artists an opportunity to invite us to experience timelessness. Here, as if through cross-fading, both past and present are interlinked.

Likewise, the title evokes a certain romanticism. To quote the artists' own words, the work is tinged with a "melancholic oddness like a response to the dislocation and alienation through modern life". So it is about being uprooted both in time and space.

Whereas previous installations exposed a soft, elegant dislocation, *Melancholic dislocation* asserts this more clearly. Even if several elements do recur (the columns and chairs), the dislocation works differently here both because of the suggested time and the time lived whilst experiencing the route through the installation. Furthermore, doesn't the whiteness that is a feature of their sculptures and installations refer to the whiteness of the stones in ancient ruins? Several of their recent creations could possibly be interpreted in this way, for example *An ideal world (Un monde parfait)* – housing estates that are as empty as they're spotless – as well as *Many dreams*, a bus abandoned in deserts of nature or paving stones, depending on the exhibition...

It seems as if the experience that Martine Feipel and Jean Bechameil are offering here is suspended in time. And it is up to the visitor to recreate its progression by choosing a rhythm for it, just as if a spectator were making a film by choosing to break it up into sections. This experience of being immersed, that *Melancholic dislocation* represents is made up primarily of light, just like projecting a film in the cinema. This is the reason for its whiteness. Because, to paraphrase Melville again, "If light were to touch the matter of things directly, it would give its empty whiteness to all objects, to tulips as well as roses".

Jérôme Lefèvre