

As the work under study the exhibition *Erre. Variations Labyrinthiques* provided the opportunity for a fresh look at what has been the laboratory's underlying concern since its creation. Thus the labyrinth can be understood as a force for a liberating expansion: «Art becomes a journey, a testing out of space and engagement by the body in a tangible environment¹». It is based on the interaction between the public and the artwork. And so «space is only valid and only exists through the experiencing of it²» and becomes the locus for «breaking through the barriers of normative perception.» And while there are constraints, the intention is not so much to captivate or capture the viewer. The artwork – or rather the exhibition – slips into the visitor's approach in order to perplex and destabilise him, and to encourage «the individual to quit a state of blindness and inertia and so become aware of his ability to act on the world with a view to transforming it³».

John Dewey saw the individual as constantly in the process of experiencing the world «because the interaction of live creature and environing conditions is involved in the very process of living⁴». This leads us to a kind of everyday investigation orchestrated by the rhythms of walking, rapid shifts of the gaze, and sensory and cognitive activity, and resembling an ambulatory mode of knowledge acquisition.

As we have already seen, this roaming (the «Erre» of the exhibition title) is not founded on the encounter between a viewer and an object. These are not little bits of space colliding and thus forming and deforming each other. While Marcel Duchamp made the viewer one of the participants in the creative process, the labyrinthine work – truly open in Umberto Eco's sense – can no longer, it seems, be reduced to an object or even to an installation or performance. It is a field, that is to say a dynamic space that absorbs the viewer as much as the viewer is absorbed in it, and both are embedded in a power game, an interplay of resistances and tensions, of excitations and incitements to distraction. At once acted upon and acting, the viewer is no longer merely frozen in contemplation: he is the co-creator of a process taking shape

around his kinaesthetic, cognitive experience.

In the catalogue Olivier Shefer speaks of Michel de Certeau, for whom «pedestrian motor functions are not localised within a container – the City in this instance – but rather spatialise and give shape to places⁵». Sociologists of the city, like Richard Sennett, Ulf Hannerz and Isaac Joseph have also homed in on the figure of the walker, the passer-by, making mention not only of indecision, but also of alertness and routine. They remind us that this activity presupposes attention to movements – to the sensory dimension of the experiencing of motor functioning. They have also foregrounded the part played by serendipitous discoveries conducive to flânerie and distraction. On the other hand Claude Lévi-Strauss relates how the Salesian missionaries moved the Bororo people into new, linear – rather than circular – villages in order to convert them. «Without the plan which acted as a confirmation of their native lore, the Indians soon lost any feeling for tradition; it was as if their social and religious systems ... were too complex to exist without the pattern embodied in the plan of the village and of which their awareness was constantly being refreshed by their everyday activities⁶».

The artist's input, then, is by no means insignificant, and resembles the production of fictions in Clifford Geertz's sense: the works are «'something made' or 'something fashioned' – the original meaning of fictio – not that they are false, unfactual, or merely 'as if' thought experiments⁷». And according to Nancy Murzilli these are «modes of exploration of our mental habits and our language games, [which are] capable of enriching our understanding and our practical experience⁸».

All these points rest on, or imply, a dynamic conception of space. For Michel Lussault space is «a hybrid, complex social resource mobilised and thus transformed in, by and for action... The operators act not on space, but rather with it.» And for Alain Berthoz, «Space is not a concept external to the human brain. It is perceived, but it is also experienced⁹». There is no absolute space: space is not «an abstract notion independent of the sensory experience of our acting body»; rather it is derived from a host of refe-

rentials chosen according to the tasks to be accomplished, and «is profoundly marked by each person's intentions and personal history.»

Michel Lussault and Jacques Lévy distinguished a positional approach to space (in which each individual is defined according to a set of positions without influencing the geometry of the system) from a relational one (in which all play a part, via their relationships, in the construction of an eminently social space). But they also distinguish two types of relationships: «The topographical (hinging on copresence) and the topological (hinging on cospatiality)»: «The first has to do with spaces marked by contiguity ... The second is enabled by the networking – of transport, of communication – that we can call connectivity.»

Alain Berthoz sees two approaches to relating to space. He terms the first egocentric – based on the motor-functional, circumstantial and sensory memory of a path followed; and the second as allocentric – based on a cartography and the mental possibility of overflight. This latter allows manipulation of space and, inter alia, retracing one's steps.

How are we to theorise working with space: not just spatialisation, but the wandering (*erre*) as well? How are we to understand the coordination of action with material manifestations, and the power relations at work? How are we to link together these different modes of relationships with space?

Denis Cercler

Anthropologist, Université Lumière-Lyon 2

Translator: **John Tittensor**

1. Alice Pfister referring to Gianni Pettena in *Erre. Variations Labyrinthiques*, 12 September 2011 – 5 March 2012, Centre Pompidou, Metz. (Metz: Centre Pompidou, 2011), p. 39.
2. Aurélien Vernant referring to Aldo Van Eyck, *Ibid.*, p. 43.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
4. John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Perigee, 1980), p. 35.
5. *Erre. Variations Labyrinthiques*, p. 211.
6. Claude Lévi Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (London: Penguin, 2012), p. 221.
7. Clifford Geertz, «Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture», *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 3–30.
8. Nancy Murzilli, «La fiction ou l'expérimentation des possibles», in *L'effet de fiction*, Fabula online colloquium, 2001.
9. Alain Berthoz, Roland Recht (eds.), *Les espaces de l'homme* (Paris: Collège de France/Odile Jacob, 2005), p.127.