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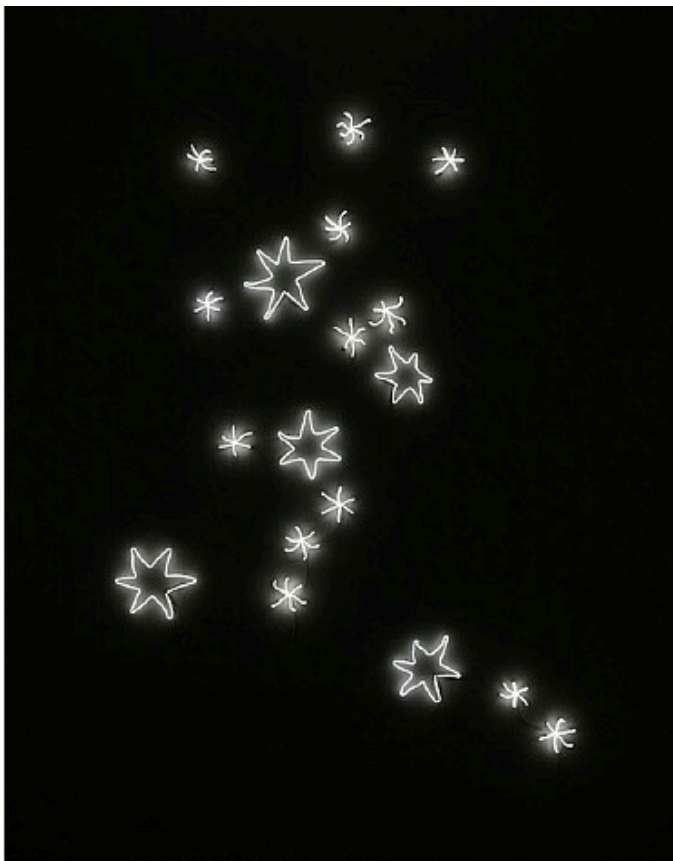
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THE HUFFINGTON POST

Beyond the White Cube, Paris Part II: Laurent Grasso's Strange and Wonderful World

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**Yasmine
Mohseni**



"1610 I," 2011.

As you wind your way through a labyrinth of dark hallways, works of art pop up into your peripheral vision, neon sculptures punctuate the space and haunting voices narrate enigmatic short films revealing strange stone monsters and anxious views from a stone fort. Welcome to Laurent Grasso's bizarre and wonderful universe. "Uraniborg," the French artist's current exhibition on view at the venerable Parisian institution *Jeu de Paume* brings to light his multi-disciplinary approach to art. He isn't interested in creating work with a defined style but seeks to capture nuanced concepts that engage history, both real and imagined, and parallel worlds where ghosts, time travel and science fiction all exist. His art is, above

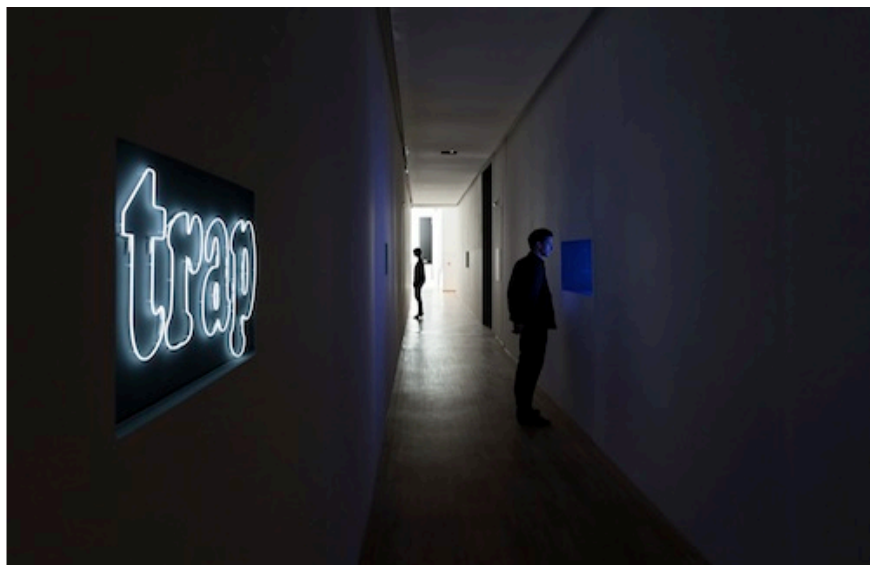
all, experiential. Grasso designed the entire display for "Uraniborg" as an extension of the artwork. The artist guides the viewer through the show ensuring a distraction-free visit, which, in less capable hands, could be a smothering imposition. But, in this case, it's highly effective, as evidenced at his opening. At most art openings, people mill about looking for familiar faces and a refill for their champagne; viewing the art becomes a secondary concern. At Grasso's May 21 opening, hushed viewers sat in a sequence of darkened rooms completely absorbed by the films projected. Grasso is enthusiastic about sharing his art and wants to make sure visitors have a positive experience at his show. I stopped by his studio the week after his opening to learn more about his fantastical universe.



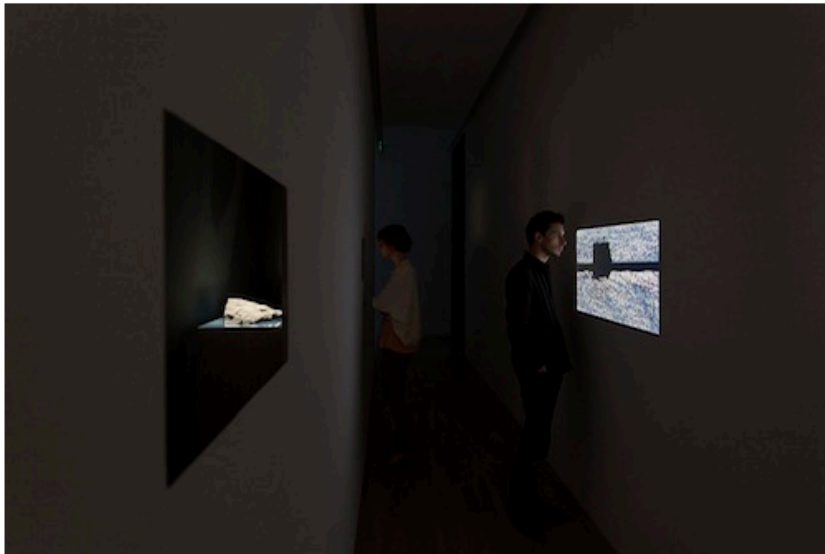
"Bomarzo," 2011.

Yasmine Mohseni: Tell me about your exhibition

Laurent Grasso: The title of the exhibition is "Uraniborg," which was 16th century Danish astronomer and alchemist Tycho Brahe's castle and observatory, it allowed him to see the universe through a window. I decided to do a movie around this invisible castle (which was destroyed), the idea of observation and how it relates to the exhibition display. It was important for me to show the relationship between my work and architecture so I decided to make the display visible and apparent. I built long corridors where you cannot see any work. In a way, the first artwork is an empty space. Each film I present in my exhibition is a kind of exploration of the invisible in another world. The camera is looking for something our eyes aren't able to see: magnetic fields or ghost activity in places loaded with meaning and energy. This connection between my projects is very strong so I sought to translate that in the physicality of the architecture at Jeu de Paume. The idea is for the viewer to feel temporal vertigo both in front of my work and while moving around the exhibition.



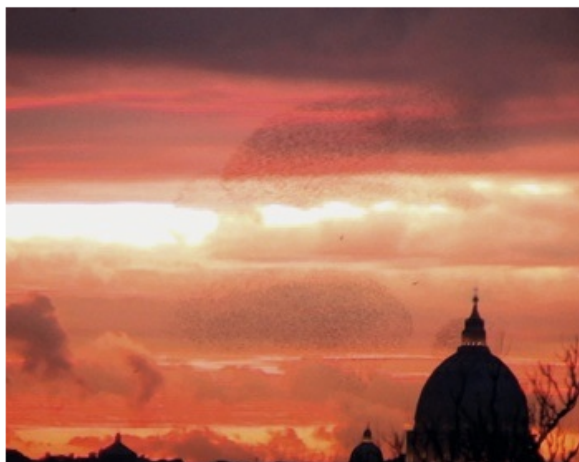
Inside of "Uraniborg". Courtesy of Jeu de Paume



Inside of "Uraniborg". Courtesy of Jeu de Paume

Can you describe your style?

For me, style doesn't exist anymore, the most important thing is the concept. It's no longer necessary to create the same object with a kind of brand where you immediately recognize the artist. I experiment with different styles but also with different temporalities, historical moments and different media, so I'm the opposite of an artist working within a style. That's if we consider the idea of style as something visual. If we consider it as something conceptual, I like the idea of playing with the status of the object: The viewer's not able to recognize the technique, where it comes from, by whom it's been made, if it's an archaeological object or a historical object. Somebody unaware of the exhibition's context could think it's a group show with some historical art works.



"Les Oiseaux", 2008.

Is there one work in art history that has influenced you the most?

Not really. I have interesting moments and experiences with art and art history. In 2011 I was invited by the Bass Museum of Art to mix my art with their Renaissance collection. The Louvre is 5 minutes away from here but it's a museum in Miami that asked me to do something like this! It's really funny! Another very interesting thing about the U.S., which I like, is this idea of reconstructing history. One of the most interesting experiences I had was at the Isabelle Stewart Gardner museum in Boston, it's crazy, it's a total set and jump in history. After this, I decided to visit all the places within the same mood. So, I went to The Cloisters in New York, I also thought this was impressive because it's a total fiction, which is linked to my practice: time travel, the contact with ghosts and the invisible.



Which artists have influenced you?

I like Mike Nelson, for the way he builds parallel spaces. I'm very influenced by cinema, like David Cronenberg and David Lynch, and I'm also very interested in literature. It's the only object able to give your brain a mental picture. My work is like that: you think you're looking at a picture but it's not a picture it's something seeking to transport you into another space; my projects are phases of mental projections. Literature can do that, I like Don DeLillo and William Faulkner.

If there's 1 dead artist you could have dinner with, who would it be?

[Long silence] There are many live artists I'd like to have dinner with.

Ok, choose one that's alive and one dead one.

I think Werner Herzog is a very interesting man, he's alive. And of the dead ones... Marcel Proust.

"Uraniborg" is on view at Jeu de Paume through September 23, 2012.

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