

Press release



The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao presents on March 30, 2017

Pierre Huyghe: *(Untitled) Human Mask*

Pierre Huyghe: *Untitled (Human Mask)*

- Dates: March 30–July 16, 2017
- Curator: Manuel Cirauqui
- Film & Video Gallery (103)

From March 30 to July 16, 2017, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao will premiere in Spain Pierre Huyghe's *Untitled (Human Mask)* (2014). This is the tenth piece presented in the Film & Video Gallery since it opened in 2014 as a showcase for video art, video installations, and the moving image.

Pierre Huyghe (b. Paris, 1962) conceived *Untitled (Human Mask)* in 2014 after learning about two trained monkeys who served and entertained patrons at a traditional sake house in Japan. Huyghe's film is shot in a location ravaged by the recent tsunami and ensuing nuclear disaster at Fukushima. A singular inhabitant wanders through a gloomy interior wearing a traditional Japanese theater mask, a woman's wig, a white shirt, and a dress resembling a school uniform. We soon realize it is a monkey, although the creature's attentive, anxious attitude and body language suggest an ambiguous humanity. Through this piece, Huyghe reflects on the paradox of observing animal behavior in a surreal setting with the intention of exploring reality—in other words, he reflects on the human condition.

The film opens with a sequence recorded by a drone in a desolate landscape dotted with derelict buildings. Inside one of those abandoned houses, the narrative emerges from the juxtaposition of close-up shots of the ape, whose movements become increasingly agitated. Although the place is deserted, the animal goes about the tasks she was trained to do: she diligently sets out a napkin, serves a bottle to an empty table, and performs the same pirouettes that once made patrons laugh in amazement. And she does this in the midst of a world that is practically destroyed, where the only signs of life are a cat, the cockroaches that scurry around the kitchen, and the maggots in bags of food left open. The female voice emanating from some undisclosed location adds to the tension of the scene, echoing the tsunami warnings issued to alert the population of impending disaster. The lack of expression of the mask further emphasizes the alienation and solitude of the figure, making us wonder about her feelings and emotions.

As in many of his works, Huyghe blurs the boundaries between fiction and reality by using characters that confront us with human nature and the mystery of our own behavior. The monkey looks towards us but cannot see us through her "human mask," while we observe in amazement the behavior of those beings with which we share the world.

Pierre Huyghe

Born in Paris in 1962, Pierre Huyghe currently lives between that city and New York. Initially trained in graphic and decorative arts, his endless ruminations on the artistic mediums and the relationships between the artwork and world around it have won him international renown. In a career spanning more than two decades, Huyghe has explored and redefined multiple disciplines: film, photography, video, sound, animation, sculpture, design, architecture, music, and performance.

Huyghe's installations, videos, and public events address a variety of realities: from a small-town parade or a puppet theater to an amusement park and an Antarctic expedition. The artist explores the narrative structures of popular culture and the links between fiction and reality, memory and history. He blurs the distinction between fiction and reality, proving the capacity of cinema to make even the most unimaginable stories seem realistic as well as to distort and ultimately shape memory. Huyghe's playful, celebratory works often address complex social topics, such as the yearning for utopia, the lure of spectacle in mass media, and the impact of modernism on the values and beliefs of our time.

His research has led him to collaborate with other artists on numerous occasions—thus defying the traditional notion of authorship—and to develop projects for some of the world's most important biennales and museums, including documenta 11 (2002) and documenta 13 (2012), the Istanbul Biennale (1999), Carnegie International, Pittsburgh (1999), or Manifesta 2 (Luxembourg, 1998). Some of his most significant solo exhibitions have been held at the Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2014); Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2014); The Artist's Institute, New York (2013); Museu d'Art Contemporani, Barcelona (2013); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2013); Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City (2012); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2010); Art Institute of Chicago (2010); Tate Modern, London (2006); Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2005); Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2005); Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2003); Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (2001); Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2000), and Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (1998). He has received the Special Jury Prize for the French Pavilion at the Venice Biennale (2001), the Smithsonian American Museum's Contemporary Artist Award (2010), and the Roswitha Haftmann Preis (2013).

Film & Video (Gallery 103)

The Film & Video Gallery is devoted to video art, video installations, and the moving image, both from the Guggenheim Museums and from other international collections. The gallery opened in March 2014 with Christian Marclay's installation *The Clock*. In June it featured Icelandic artist Ragnar Kjartansson's *The Visitors*, and from October 2014 to March 2015, Rineke Dijkstra's video installation *The Crazyhouse (Megan, Simon, Nicky, Philip, Dee)*, *Liverpool, UK* was presented in this gallery. Between March and July, the film series *Thread Routes* produced by conceptual artist Kimsooja was on display, followed by Shahzia Sikander's *Parallax* from July to November 2015. From December 3, 2015, to April 24, 2016, the gallery hosted Singapore-born artist Ho Tzu Nyen's installation *The Cloud of Unknowing* and finally, from May 12 to August 28, 2016, Eija-Liisa Ahtila's *The Annuntiation (Marian Illestys)* was presented in this gallery. The installation *Sigh* (2008) by Sam Taylor-Johnson was on view from

September 8 through December 11, 2016. The last installation presented was *Disorient* (2009) by Fiona Tan, on view from December 22, 2016, through March 19, 2017.

Cover image:

Pierre Huyghe

Untitled (Human Mask) (2014)

Film, color, stereo sound, 2 min. 66 sec. Running time: 19 min.

Courtesy of the artist and Hauser & Wirth, London, & Anna Lena Films, Paris

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For more information:

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All information about the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is available at www.guggenheim-bilbao.eus (press room).

Press Images for
Pierre Huyghe's *Untitled (Human Mask)*
Guggenheim Museum Bilbao

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For further information, please contact the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao Press Department: tel. +34 944 35 90 08 and email: media@guggenheim-bilbao.eus

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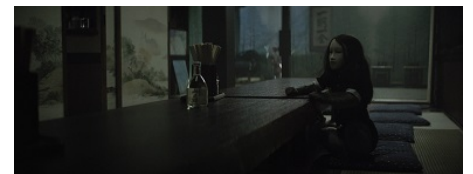
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