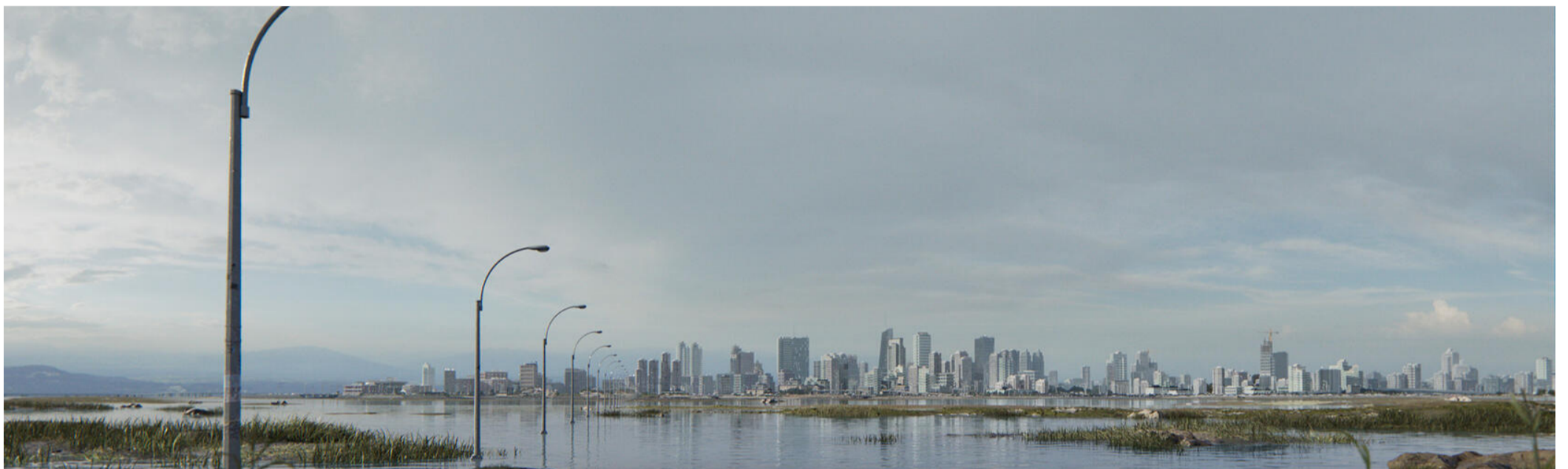


FRIEZE

The Algorithmic Fissures of Philippe Parreno

In a new body of work, the artist proposes a voice that blurs artificial intelligence and liveness

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Last November, when I visited 'Hertzian Tales', Philippe Parreno's recent solo show at Gladstone Gallery, New York, I was plunged into an ecology of signal and stimuli, then propelled towards some digital shoreline where algorithmic depths become talkative. The exhibition was figured as an outgrowth of one of its parts: *The Owl in Daylight* (2020–23), a video of a gradationally atrophying waterscape rendered in real-time CGI from a variety of data inputs, including external barometric pressure shifts read by a sensor-cum-divining rod on the building's roof. The film is titled after Philip K. Dick's final novel, unpublished at the time of his death in 1982, in which an alien species without experience of sound fetishizes Earth's noisy biosphere. In an interview conducted not long before he passed, Dick divulged his storyline for *The Owl in Daylight* – and it accrues meaning in relation to the digital utterances that pool, as sonic fictions, within the layered dramaturgy of Parreno's version.

The component parts that populate Parreno's exhibitions – which he dubs 'moments of practice' when we speak in November after my visit – will often, retroactively, metamorphose into machines for further experimentation and fresh syntheses. *The Owl in Daylight*, for instance, was originally presented at Esther Schipper in Berlin in 2020, and then workshopped in stages – likewise playing scaffold for an accretion of voices, alongside the AI systems that power them, to 'produce synchronicities'. Subsequent presentations at the Bourse de Commerce, Paris, and LUMA Arles introduced a mirrored heliostat, intended as a proxy for the sun, whose light beam brushes surfaces like an 'inverted projector', Parreno describes to me. In 'Hertzian Tales', a strikingly humanoid version of this work, *Heliotrope* (2023), motions telescopically, with extraplanetary twitch, while it refracts onto *The Owl in Daylight*'s slow tableau. Its motion is both guided by and responsive to another strata: a 'modeled' version of actress Charlotte Gainsbourg's voice emitted from sleek speaker arrays – its architectonic mouthpiece – and was developed with both Nicolas Becker, Parreno's long-time collaborator, and BRONZE, a Los Angeles-based lab for generative audio.



Philippe Parreno, 'Hertzian Tales', 2023, installation view. Courtesy: the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York

Derived from what Parreno frames as the 'spectrum of tonality' of Gainsbourg's voice – recordings of only its phoneme units – the model was trained by machine protocols to generate the 'sensation' of different geophonic phenomena, such as wind, rain and lakes. These post-natural weathers score *The Owl in Daylight* and test the extent to which a distorted, acousmatic voice 'can generate an entire world'. Never verbal, the model's linguistic indecipherability relates an oracular uncanny as mouth-sounds glue into climate syntax. I imagine how this simulation could function as a prosthetic soundscape on an interstellar mission. *The Owl in Daylight* hinges on the model's additive and ambiguous textures, and its subtle, biologizing effect in contrast to Parreno's audio-visual apparatus that produces inorganic machine sounds –some so augmented in postproduction as to almost confer orality. Hardware aids in distilling his exhibitions' softer strata, imbuing Parreno's infrastructure with something of an artificial sensory intelligence and ontogenetic liveness.

Interested in the potentials of 'invisible forces' to make themselves felt, especially within non-optic environments, Parreno leaves room for phenomena to materialize. What emerges in 'Hertzian Tales' is a new species of biosynthetic voice, incubated in an algorithmic fissure, that speaks weather. Its origins do not disclose themselves, but the voice does ferment, palpably, and invites us to speculate on its technogenesis. The lifeform generated from Parreno's matrix, then, cannot be accounted for: the Gainsbourg model dissolves its very artificiality. Something organic is born via this mouthpiece, which serves as proxy for possible futures in which voices detached from diaphragms become digitally sensual, belonging to no one. We wonder what Dick's *Owl in Daylight* aliens would hear in Parreno's transmissions (lest they be undetected exoplanetary ventriloquy already) of outer depths and undersea cables brought into audible range.

The work, though, is far from done: Parreno will continue to collaborate with Gainsbourg on a new project, a 'cross-portrait' also featuring another actress, which will probe how a 'disincarnated' voice, free from the constraints of a body, can become an agent of fiction – where anticipatory, uncoded phonetics might render worlds from occulted cadence.

Philippe Parreno, '_____', is on view at the Leeum Museum of Art, Seoul, until 7 July.

Main Image: Philippe Parreno, The Owl in Daylight, 2020–23, film still. Courtesy: the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York



Philippe Parreno, *Heliotrope*, 2023, metal, optical mirror, servo drive, cables, 2.2 × 1.8 × 1.8 m.
Courtesy: the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York