

Rosa Barba

*Thoughts of Sorts*

Parra & Romero is very pleased to present the first exhibition at the gallery of the artist Rosa Barba (Sicily, 1972). Titled *Thoughts of Sorts*, the show takes the gallery's architecture as a starting point to hold a complex dialogue with some recent sculptural pieces and investigations. The title of the exhibition is borrowed from a compilation of essays by Georges Perec where he investigates the ways by which we define our place in the world, revealing in listmaking, orientating, classifying.

Rosa Barba's works encompassing sculptures, installations, text pieces, and publications are grounded in the material qualities of cinema. With her radical experimentation with the medium of cinema, the artist creates a new language. Her pieces not only dissect cinema itself but also fragment narration into different layers, implying a level of abstraction in which imagination and a conceptual approach play a decisive role.

Through her installations, Rosa Barba continues her exploration of film and its capacity to simultaneously be an immaterial medium that carries information and a physical material with sculptural properties. The category of film is expanded and abstracted beyond the literal components of the celluloid strip, the projector through which it passes and the image projected onto a screen. Each component becomes a starting point for artworks that expand on the idea of film as well as exploring its intrinsic attributes.

*The Color Out of Space* (2015), a new film incorporating images of stars and planets collected over the last two years by the Hirsch Observatory at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute expands upon Barba's ongoing interrogation of geological time as measured against the span of a human lifetime. *The Color Out of Space* consists of images of celestial bodies captured by an astronomy camera fixed to a telescope. Barba edited these still images into a high-definition video sequence accompanied by vocal commentary collected and compiled from university astronomers, artists and writers. Projected for the first time onto the facade of the Experimental Media and Performing Art Center (EMPAC) at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, where it was visible from the highway passing by, one could tune in to the soundtrack broadcasted over the local radio station. The site was transformed into an outdoor cinema that used the solar system as source material for a speculative film.

The piece was transformed by the artist into a more intimate sculpture and premiered at Barba's recent survey show at MIT List Visual Arts Center in Cambridge, US, where the video was projected through a series of transparent colored glass panels, which both multiply and cancel out the luminous pictures of the moon, nebulae, planets and stars. The glass panels serve as optical devices that block out as much as they make visible. As one astronomer explains in the soundtrack: "we are in fact looking at a shadow of something that doesn't exist."

In *Enterprise of Notations* (2013) several spheres are transported on a rail by a perforated film while being projected simultaneously. The process alludes to early forms of telecommunication or the punch cards of early music transcripts.

*Conductor* (2014) is a spherical membrane, which is actuated and pulsatively and rhythmically deformed through sound. "Abstraction has always been a very important method for me. I started to fragment my work very early into singular aspects of the projected image. This fragmentation became more condensed into observable phenomena in my sculptural approach, with the strong use of the language of loops as a continual transposition

of material into an image and back again. The strategy of repetition always helped me to formulate an idea.” (Rosa Barba)

In *Spacelength Thought* (2012) a typewriter is typing a monologue onto 16mm blank film projecting it by singleletters. Like in a Turing machine a code is being recited mechanically and unveiled through the projection, creating a kind of poetry line – an imagistic form of language: at the same time an enigmatic machine and an openly spread process. The typing machine acts as an author, but the text production does not adapt to a human reading routine; it extends the production time of a single word or even a single letter and moves at the pace of the celluloid: a manic writer, driven by a powerful production energy, endlessly inscribing text into film.

The text producer projects only fragments onto the wall – the whole text is only readable during the exhibition. The film-text is produced on location, seconds before it is projected onto the wall, and remains and builds up on the floor as a winding cloud of printed film: the process of writing is staged there, in the exhibition space.

“For me, a machine is performing an activity: you can see how one thing leads to another and everything can be examined. When I invent a new machine, I simply discover another aspect of cinematic expression by separating an element or inventing one that hadn’t been there before.” (Rosa Barba)

Like others of her text based works, the filmic sculpture *Focus Puller* (2013) is performing an enigmatic monologue circling and zooming into a thought or an idea: in a constant try to make the inscribed text fragments visible, the projection moves from one glass screen to the other.

The work had been developed for the artist's solo exhibition at Turner Contemporary in Margate (2013), where many of her sculptures and films were put in relation to William Turner's lectures on perspective. For the exhibition she had also curated a selection of those drawings he had used at Royal College to be part of her show.

A work that balances many of Rosa Barba’s filmic sculptural concerns is *The Long Poem Manipulates Spatial Organizations* (2014). In this case the 16mm projector has been manipulated by tilting it 45 degrees so that the image is more of a diamond than a square. The image is a series of color filters (like *Color Studies*, 2013, her previous work and first investigation/orchestration on color) with stencilled letters that have been carved out of the celluloid: a fragmented poem, turning the single letters nearly into a musical composition, occasionally even displacing the need for language.

“In this piece, Barba ties together many threads that run through her practice: the shift between the filmic image and the apparatus that produces it, the liminal space where language is constituted and collapses, a preoccupation with color as a parallel register of signification, and the activation of sound as a key locus of meaning, even in its absence.” (Ben Borthwick)

In *Sight Enables Us to Appreciate Distance* (2013/2016) the artist wrote a fragmented text onto 70mm film which was inspired by readings of Henri Poincaré about Science and Hypothesis in Space.

A fascination with concrete poetry runs through Barba’s use of text, both in the narrative use of text in her films but also more abstractly with letters as units of possibility as the reading is nonlinear and fragmented through the different speeds of the sentences:

“Let us consider a purely visual impression, due to an image formed on the back of the retina.”

Rosa Barba's works has been widely exhibited in important institutions, biennials and festivals worldwide.

Recent solo exhibitions include the Albertinum in Dresden, Germany (2015/2016); MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge MA, USA (2015); CAC (Contemporary Art Center), Vilnius, Lithuania (2014); MAXXI (Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI secolo), Rome (2014); Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK (2013); Bergen Kunsthall, Norway (2013); Cornerhouse, Manchester, UK (2013); MUSAC (Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León), León, Spain (2013), Jeu de Paume, Paris (2012); Kunsthaus Zürich, Switzerland (2012); Marfa Book Company, Marfa, Texas (2012); the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis, Missouri (2012) and Tate Modern, London (2010).

She has participated in many group exhibitions, amongst others at the Centre Pompidou, Metz, France (2016), MASS MoCA, North Adams, (2014–2015); Akademie der Künste, Berlin (2014); Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz, Switzerland (2014); Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark (2012); WIELS Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels (2013); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2010); Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2008) and her works have been exhibited at the major biennials worldwide, including the 8th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, Museum Dahlem (2014); International Triennial of New Media Art, Beijing, China (2014); 19th Biennale of Sydney (2014); Performa, New York City, (2013), International Biennial of Contemporary Art of Cartagena de Indias, Colombia (2014); Liverpool Biennale (2010) and the 53rd and 56th Biennale di Venezia: "Making Worlds" (2009; curated by Daniel Birnbaum) and "All the World's Futures" (2015; curated by Okwui Enwezor).

Her work has been widely published, amongst others in the monographic books "Rosa Barba: White Is an Image" (2011), "Rosa Barba: Time as Perspective" (2013), both published by Hatje Cantz; "Rosa Barba: In Conversation With" (2011; Mousse Publishing) and "Rosa Barba: The Color Out of Space" (2016; published by Dancing Foxes Press).

Rosa Barba's works are represented in numerous public collections such as Tate Modern, London, Collezione MAXXI Arte, Rome, Italy; Collezione FRAC Piemonte, Vercelli, Italy; Hamburger Bahnhof–Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark; Museo d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto, Italy; Museo Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; Kunsthaus Zürich; MACBA (Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona); MAMbo (Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna); The Federal Collection of Contemporary Art, Germany, the Fundación Jumex Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City and the MIT List Center of Visual Arts, Cambridge, USA.

In 2015 Rosa Barba was awarded the 46th PIAC, International Prize for Contemporary Art, Fondation Prince Pierre de Monaco for her film work *Subconscious Society, a Feature* (2014) and the NEW:VISION Award, CPH:DOX Copenhagen, for her latest film *Bending to Earth* (2015).

Her upcoming exhibitions include Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, the CAPC in Bordeaux and the 32nd São Paulo Art Biennial.