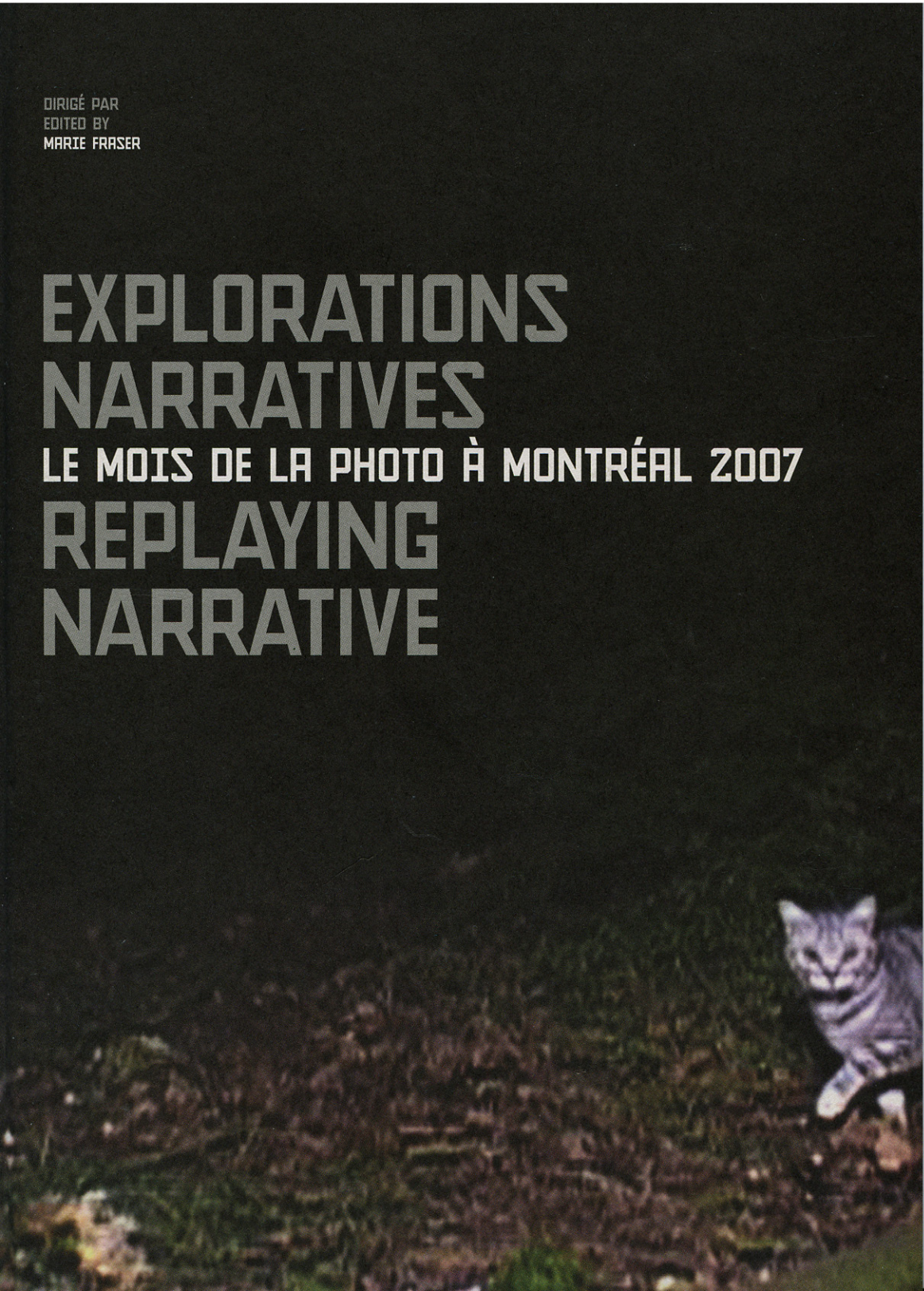


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EXPLORATIONS NARRATIVES LE MOIS DE LA PHOTO À MONTRÉAL 2007 REPLAYING NARRATIVE



SAMPLING AND DATABASES

A number of artists reuse cinema as a cultural product to suggest alternatives to both the proliferation of images in today's world and the speed with which they are transmitted. Sampling is one important example of the various narrative modes that appropriate cultural images in order to “reprogram” them. As used here, the term differs from the way in which it is normally understood in cinema, that is, as the work of editing in chronological order; rather, I use it to refer to a dynamics of disassembling and reassembling that is closer to the work of postproduction.²⁶

Candice Breitz takes the products of contemporary visual culture (Hollywood movies, soap operas, video clips and games, etc.) and reshapes them to suit her own purposes, cutting and reframing them using the sampling technique and subjecting them to an implacable cyclical logic. Through the dynamics of disassembly and reassembly characteristic of sampling, she appropriates popular narrative models stemming mainly from the Hollywood industry, in order to turn them back on themselves and expose the stereotyped and standardized dimension of certain film narrative clichés. The work of rerecording and reassembling deconstructs the original screenplay and, as in *Soliloquy Trilogy* (2000), brings the image back to language. All that remains of the original films are shots in which three Hollywood actors (Jack Nicholson, Clint Eastwood, Sharon Stone) say their lines. The narrative element is, as it were, regenerated, and the recomposed image sequences tell a different story. This work of postproduction makes it possible to resist the stereotypical, fixed narrative models of the movie industry and the media.

The cinema is an inexhaustible repository of images that can be reused, manipulated, restructured and deconstructed. Mike Hoolboom also makes the sampling technique his own, using it in films to explore the narrative potential of complex montages of images that belong to the history of cinema and media, films or family images that he overlays with voiceovers. Fancifully juxtaposing a vast repertory of images, Hoolboom constructs new narrative frameworks that explore the death and survival of images in relation to forgetfulness and memory. A number of his films (*Imitations of Life*, 2003, and *The Invisible Man*, 2005) present themselves as a meditation on the end of cinema and the survival of images.

Josée Pedneault's *Murmures* (2007) is yet another example of image composition at work. This time, however, because the sequences are managed by a computer, they proceed randomly through a potentially endless range of possibilities, relationships and associations. Devoid of any order or logic, the image sequences can be permuted and reorganized indefinitely, subject to the chance operations of a computer program that dips into a database of over 400 images. Here the narrative element does not function like that of a screenplay (there being no predetermined order), but like a “program” that composes, decomposes and recomposes visual associations in a random manner. The images scroll by without any causal relationship, devoid equally of any logical coherence or temporal development. They constitute a stream of decontextualized images in constant flux, one that is at each moment recontextualized in accordance with new narrative and temporal linkages. *Murmure* also comes across as an immersive multiscreen, multimedia installation. With its many screens, on which photographs stand alongside short video sequences, and with the prominent role it gives to sound, this piece gives shape to narrative associations that function in terms of multiplicity and simultaneity. The immersive dimension also leads us to lose our bearings. Nothing linear or unifying, no sense of closure capable of generating a narrative logic, is possible within such a framework of temporal links and references. The sequences are managed not by a chronological system but by random modes that function in a manner somewhat akin to the way memory works. We know that memory breaks down linear structures, that it has a fitful, spasmodic temporality and rhythm; but, more importantly, we know that it establishes a singular relationship to time.

26. I borrow the term and concept from Nicolas Bourriaud. See his *Postproduction - Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World* (New York: Lukas and Stenberg, 2002).

