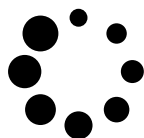


AN-ICON



Laure Prouvost's  
*Deep See Blue*

*Surrounding You: An Immersive  
Environment Made of Objects*

by Stefano Mudu

Laure Prouvost

Surrealism

Object-oriented ontology

Hyper-enactment

Venice Biennale

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# Laure Prouvost's *Deep See Blue Surrounding You*. An Immersive Environment Made of Objects



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## Abstract

This paper aims to demonstrate how Laure Prouvost's artistic practice requires an immersion of the viewer in intermedial installations composed of objects from the most disparate spatial and temporal origins. Since the early 2000s, the French artist has intentionally created surreal *mise-en-scenes* which, by blending video, painting, drawing, sculpture, and performance, can be understood as compositions or collages made of visual references taken from different contexts such as pop culture, the web, and private photo albums. Prouvost's works are "unstable visual entities," made of images that aggregate in heterogeneous configurations, generating eccentric atmospheres and cancelling every hierarchical order between the observer and the observed. Viewers are encouraged to fill the space by becoming objects among other objects.

By using the Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) as philosophical and methodological support, this paper will focus more closely on the analysis of *Deep See Blue Surrounding You / Vois Ce Bleu Profond Te Fondre* (2019), the project Prouvost produced for the French Pavilion at the 58th Venice Biennale. On this occasion, her work *They Parlaient Idéale* (2019) – a video documenting the Mediterranean Sea journey that brings her to the Venetian lagoon – was the cornerstone of a multifaceted environmental installation.

Assuming a critical and analytical approach, this contribution then discusses the role *Deep See Blue Surrounding You* plays as a “hyper-enactment:” it is a *mise-en-scene* that consists of interrelationships between “things/images” that aggregate as objects, but it is also a composition in which the viewers are “viscously” asked to generate their personal, non-linear narration.

Keywords [Laure Prouvost](#) [Surrealism](#) [Object-oriented ontology](#)  
[Hyper-enactment](#) [Venice Biennale](#)

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A trip to our unconscious  
With the help of our brains in our tentacles,  
we dig tunnels to the past and the future towards Venice.<sup>1</sup>

It is neither trivial nor negligible that the term “surreal” recurs in the many critical essays and contributions that have attempted to provide a complete – although hardly exhaustive – description of Laure Prouvost’s art practice. And indeed, the appellation seems to fit perfectly if one considers that, in line with the avant-garde sensibility, the French artist’s works appear as *mis-en-scène* (or as we will say later, *enactments*) with a programmatically eccentric aesthetic as to “freely alternate the experience of daily life with imaginary, dreamlike sensation.”<sup>2</sup>

Pop culture allusions intertwine with biographical narratives; historical sources and events are polluted by the exuberant use of private memories; consolidated linguistic codes and aesthetic canons are cancelled by a good dose of automatism and improvisation: in other words, thanks to the juxtaposition of heterogeneous elements taken from more or less distant realities, Prouvost’s works seem to create a universe of reveries that follows the poetic and emotional ambiguities of that famous “surreality” promoted by André Breton.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, as if to embrace the Freudian creed of the father of the French avant-garde, each installation by the artist seems to be the place of a real mediation between truth and fiction, functioning as a threshold for a reality similar to the subconscious, in which

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1 M. Kirszenbaum, ed., *Laure Prouvost: Deep See Blue Sourrounding You / Vois ce bleu profonde te fondre* (press kit/ English) (Venice: 2019): 9. [https://www.citedesartsparis.net/media/cia/183726-press\\_release\\_en.pdf](https://www.citedesartsparis.net/media/cia/183726-press_release_en.pdf), accessed December 12, 2022.

2 R. Tenconi, ed., *Grand Dad’s Visitor Center* (Milan: Mousse Publishing, 2019, exhibition catalogue): 16.

3 Famous and descriptive of the attitude in question is the first definition of “surreality” offered by Breton in the first Manifesto of the avant-garde: “I believe in the future resolution of these two states, dream and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality, a surreality, if one may so speak.” See A. Breton, “First Manifesto of Surrealism (1924),” in C. Harrison, P. Wood, eds., *Art in Theory 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992): 432-439, 436.

each subject is required to immerse themselves and create a personal narrative and/or vision.<sup>4</sup>

Beyond the conceptual purposes of such an approach – which very poetically allude to the possibility of annulling any canon to celebrate the supremacy of subjectivity in every field of experience and knowledge, from religion to sexuality, from ecology to psychology – the outcome of this immersion in images is achieved by Prouvost thanks to the creation of compositions. Indeed, as will be explicitly stated below, each work is presented as a shape-shifting installation which not only integrates video, painting, drawing, sculpture and performance, but treats the materials derived from the use of these media as autonomous and ever changing “objects.” As they are “unstable visual entities,” they are not only “ready-made,” taken from the most disparate contexts – mass culture, the web or family albums; they are often objects created by Prouvost herself for other projects, which continuously migrate from one work to another, adding new levels of space-time stratification to the last one in the series. In any case – whether they are commonly used materials, created from scratch or already part of the artist’s repertoire – each of them joins the others in such elaborate configurations as to require the viewer to immerse themselves completely in the installation. Laure Prouvost’s intention, indeed, is to create “networks” of meaning and connections between the objects to make the observer feel immersed in the body of her works. As the observer enters the installations, the hierarchies among the objects are eliminated and they become an object among other objects; now consumed by the composition.

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4 In the introduction to her *Legsicon* – a book published in 2019 in the occasion of *AM-BIG-YOU-US LEGSICON*, the solo show she presented at MhKA in Antwerp – Prouvost argues that her editorial and exhibition project functions almost as a guide for the viewer who, together with her, “will be digging deeper and deeper into the subconscious.” See L. Prouvost, “Introduction,” in N. Haq, ed., *Legsicon: Laure Prouvost* (Bruges-Antwerp: Books Works with M HKA, 2019, exhibition catalogue): 7.

## Surreal compositions, immersive installations

The operations of doubling, repetition, manipulation or aggregation that all these materials are subject to (or simply their abundance in a single installation) make it difficult to provide a unitary, linear, complete description of the “contradictory surreality” which distinguishes the compositions they participate of or give life to. A sensation that is often intensified by the use of architectural structures capable of mediating their appearance and producing in the viewer a more vivid sensation of immersion in absurd scenarios, characterized by spatial as well as temporal and conceptual exuberance.

For instance, in *They Are Waiting for You* (2017), an installation conceived for the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis,<sup>5</sup> the artist had brought together an abundance of everyday objects (plants, tables, chairs, breast-shaped sculptures, posters, etc.) which unsurprisingly became protagonists of a broad reflection on language. According to Prouvost, even oral or written communication is the expression of an ambiguous surreality: word by word, it helps to get the sense of the world but it also generates constant misunderstandings.

As suggested by the title, the viewer found all these materials in a waiting room after walking a short corridor that separated them from the rest of the museum (from full-blown reality). Here, alongside the objects, there was also the video-performance *Dit Learn* (2015) in which Prouvost, with a persuasive whisper, addressed the patrons involving them in learning new forms of communication by deconstructing and undermining consolidated knowledge.<sup>6</sup>

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5 The work has evolved over the years, and in addition to having modified various installation variables in many exhibition venues, it has also become a samesake theater piece presented for the first time in Minneapolis when the exhibition opened. See “Laure Prouvost in collaboration with Sam Belinfante and Pierre Droulers: They Are Waiting for You,” Walker Art Center, <https://walkerart.org/calendar/2018/laure-prouvost-in-collaboration-with-sam-belinfante-and-pierre-droulers-they-are-waiting-for-you>, accessed December 12, 2022.

6 For any further information about the project, see V. Sung, “Laure Prouvost’s Artworks Need You to Exist,” Walker Art Center, <https://walkerart.org/magazine/laure-prouvost-they-are-waiting-for-you-installation>, accessed December 9, 2022.

Indeed, as the critic and curator Nav Haq has argued, this space was conceived as a meeting place for the viewer and many common objects which acquired new meanings in the film; despite being immobile, these were “literally talking to each other. They were animated, in a state of flux, preparing us to learn their new meanings.”<sup>7</sup>

A few years earlier, on the occasion of her first solo exhibition in Lithuania, Prouvost had combined these conceptual and linguistic oddities with a bold use of architecture which, with its physiognomy, literally allowed immersion in her imagination. In Vilnius, in fact, she had presented “Burrow Me” (2015), a hand-dug underground cave in the garden of the Rupert Art Center which housed a video and a series of objects capable of an absurd narration about her artist grandfather.

Just to provide another example, one of the latest and most famous monumental works – entitled *Deep Sea Blue Surrounding You* (2019) and presented on the occasion of the 58th Venice Biennale – was conceived with the specific purpose of simulating in a very surrealistic way the entry into the stomach of a marine animal, ideally an octopus. And precisely with the aim of accompanying the viewer in “a liquid and tentacular universe,”<sup>8</sup> each visual, verbal and sound material was conceived to recall another, in a fluid game of free associations of meaning and form all aimed at erasing perceptive certainties and giving life to the abysmal metaphor to which the title alluded.

This last work is an emblematic case study to understand the characteristic immersiveness of Prouvost’s installations, so it is at least necessary to retrace the visit itinerary proposed for the occasion. It should be underlined, however, that trying to order the elements that contribute to the creation of this or other projects by the artist can only give exclusively partial results.

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7 N. Haq, “Laure Prouvost’s Lexicon of Ambiguity,” in N. Haq, *Legsicon*: 9-16, 15.

8 M. Kirszenbaum, ed., [https://www.citedesartsparis.net/media/cia/183726-press\\_release\\_en.pdf](https://www.citedesartsparis.net/media/cia/183726-press_release_en.pdf), accessed December 12, 2022.

## ***Deep Sea Blue Surrounding You***

Seen from the outside, the French Pavilion at the 58th Venice Biennale bore no striking indication of the many oddities that would in fact envelop the visitor once they entered the exhibition space. Indeed, from a formal point of view, the neoclassical temple appeared immaculate and well structured; it certainly presented no more aesthetical connotations than other previous Biennials had. The expectation of an ordinary installation vanished since at regular intervals the architecture disappeared in a blanket of artificial fog and the main entrance to the Pavilion, under the colonnade, was barred. On the left side of the loggia, almost confused with the pattern of the façade, a first sculpture appeared which, like a small billboard, had specific features and signaling functions. In fact, a sentence engraved on the stone read “IDEALLY YOU WOULD GO DEEPER TO THE BACK OF THIS BUILDING” and invited you to cross the rich vegetation that surrounded the structure to reach the back of the building (Fig. 1). Here, the viewer accessed the exhibition space from the foundations of the Pavilion (Fig. 2): a dark and liminal space which, in its being a connoted threshold, sanctioned the transition between inside and outside, non-art and art, real and imaginary, order and disorder, and progressively accompanied the visitor to immerse themselves in the many contradictions of meaning and form that characterize the aforementioned “surreality” of Prouvost.

In this specific passage area, the first objects were delivered to the spectator: masks which, for those familiar with Prouvost’s work, represented the first indication of a recycling of images, since the artist used them as props at least in her video *Dit Learn*, and perhaps even earlier, in some of her early experimental video-performances.

As on previous occasions, the iconography of the mask certainly alluded to the need of a camouflage operation with the new reality created by the artist. Perhaps it was even referring to the need to cancel the identity of the wearer. But in this specific work, thanks to the phonetic



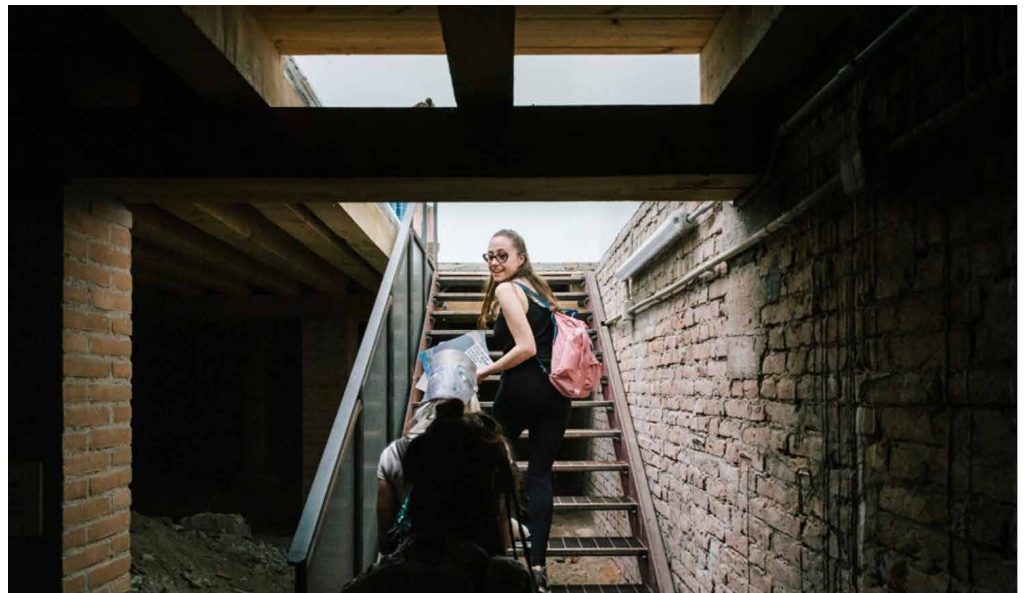


Fig. 1/2 – Laure Prouvost, *Deep See Blue Surrounding You*, French Pavilion Biennale Venice 2019 (installation view) © Laure Prouvost, Photography by Gianni Cipriano

ambiguity of the term “Sea” in the title *Deep Sea Blue Surrounding You* – a homophone to “see” – the mask seemed to become to all intents and purposes a vision device to approach and be able to interpret the abysmal world in which visitors were about to immerse themselves.

The next room was then conceived as an ante-chamber that anticipated the true immersion in the narrative, of which it was already strewn with clues. It was dazzlingly lit and apparently empty, except for a light blue resin floor in which, like on a waterline, various types of objects were trapped: from biological remains (such as eggshells, feathers, dry branches), to artificial materials (such as telephones or plastic bottles) and finally small glass sculptures that reproduced the shape of animals, often marine (such as octopuses, fish and jellyfish) (Fig. 3). These were objects from Prouvost’s imagery, which circulate from project to project and, not surprisingly, belong to the series she called “reliques.” Indeed, as the latter title suggests, these sculptures worked as traces, as “archaeological” fragments of the artist’s design history, and at the same time they served as the necessary material for the construction of ever new narratives. Objects that Prouvost defines as “Being used to help [...] Used to prove something, get the imagination



Fig. 3 – Laure Prouvost, *Deep See Blue Surrounding You*, French Pavilion Biennale Venice 2019 (installation view) © Laure Prouvost, Courtesy Lisson Gallery, Carlier | Gebauer, and Galerie Nathalie Obadia. Photography by Cristiano Corte

going. Proof of reality. A small part of a bigger thing, often used by religions.”<sup>9</sup>

After crossing a further threshold – this time a fabric membrane (Fig. 4) – the spectator finally had the sensation of immersing themselves in an abysmal world whose intermediary objects, distributed in three rooms, all referred to the video *They Parlaient Idéale* (2019), projected on a large screen (Fig. 5).



Fig. 4 – Laure Prouvost, *Deep See Blue Surrounding You*, French Pavilion Biennale Venice 2019. Photography by Gianni Cipriano



Fig. 5 – Laure Prouvost, *Deep See Blue Surrounding You*, French Pavilion Biennale Venice 2019 (installation view) © Laure Prouvost, Courtesy Lisson Gallery, Carlier | Gebauer, and Galerie Nathalie Obadia. Photography by Cristiano Corte

9 L. Prouvost, “Reliques” in N. Haq, *Legsicon*: 245.

While the filmic work documented with a bizarre gaze the (initiatory) journey undertaken by the artist to reach the Venetian lagoon and followed the story of different professionals who, in the Mediterranean, deal with magic, music or dance; the installation consisted of further traces/relics of the film image or other materials that mimicked its aesthetics. The space surrounding the projection housed the film's props, but was also filled with sculptures in resin, clay, glass and fabric, with plants and steam that derived from other projects or recalled their aesthetics and temporality (Fig. 6). All together, these visual materials formed an abysmal atmosphere in which the viewer immersed themselves metaphorically and literally, conceptually and formally.



Fig. 6 – Laure Prouvost, *Deep See Blue Surrounding You*, French Pavilion Biennale Venice 2019 (installation view) © Laure Prouvost, Courtesy Lisson Gallery, Carlier | Gebauer, and Galerie Nathalie Obadia. Photography by Cristiano Corte

The seats on which viewers could sit looked like coral formations, but they also perfectly mimicked the forms of the architecture of the *Palais Ideal du Facteur Cheval* from which the journey had started – some had a riding saddle resting on them to recall the scene in which ideally a group of knights starts the film. The wrought iron mannequins (*Metal Men and Woman*, 2015-22) were the same as in previous projects, and here they wore the same mask used by some performers in the film and handed over to the viewer at the entrance to the Pavilion. Structures in the shape of an umbrella-fountain made of Murano glass [*Cooling System (for global worming)*, ca. 2017-2019] inhabited the space after being used

as props in a performance that took place in the spaces of the Pavilion and throughout Venice the days before the opening. Then a large tapestry was conceived as a collage of images taken from the film which, woven together, functioned as a decidedly chaotic storyboard.

To put it differently, the filmic work *They Parlaient Idéale*, as if it were the stomach of the octopus in which Prouvost wanted to immerse the viewer, held together in a truly sprawling way a series of images and objects which, like fragments from different provenances, came in sequence simultaneously declaring their being anchored to different spatio-temporalities and their ability to build new entities. All together, so to speak, these materials worked as pre-existing entities that united in a new “enactment” – an unprecedented staging – conceptually or formally multicellular.

### **Diving viscously among objects**

It has already been noted how this aggregative methodology guarantees the most vivacious conceptual outcomes to Prouvost’s works – since for the French artist, following Breton, the image seems to arise from the juxtaposition of different realities and to present itself all the stronger the more distant and just the relations between them are. And it is also evident that the surreal language is used by the artist as a narrative ploy to narrate the complex identity and the ecological urgencies of the contemporary world, which perhaps needs dreamlike distance from reality in order to understand and face its critical issues.

Instead, it seems necessary to point out the process with which, within her installations, the artist achieves similar outcomes in terms of content. It is necessary to describe as far as possible the order in which the various visual materials are joined, the artist’s “rules” – if any – for the juxtaposition of objects and images in the installation.

In this sense, it seems to be of great help to use some partial notions formulated in the context of the



so-called Object-Oriented Ontology or OOO, one of the most radical philosophical currents which proposes to study reality starting from the role and status of the materials that form it, all attributable to the rank of “objects.”<sup>10</sup>

According to the OOO, any experience of reality would in fact be composed of delimited entities which, regardless of their human, non-human, inhuman, animal or imaginary nature, join together to create reality of progressive complexity. Graham Harman, founder of the theory, underlines how each manifestation of reality is linked by a biographical relationship with the materials that compose it but which, at the same time, is distinguished by the emergence of new and peculiar qualities.

Although it aspires to define itself as a “theory of everything” and, not without potential systemic problems and flaws, it intends to act on reality at all disciplinary levels – from history to art, from ethics to politics – the functioning of such aggregation model between “objects” seems to have extremely notable repercussions especially in the context of artistic production, where the case studies are small enough to be analyzed, and where the intermedia approach has now led to the coexistence of materials so different as to require the intervention of new analytical tools to understand the equal importance they assume in the composition.

In *Deep See Blue Surrounding You*, for instance, architecture, sculpture, video, performance and design produce autonomous objects of a heterogeneous nature which, however, manage to unite in coherent formal and narrative agglomerations. Just as the OOO maintains, bodies, sounds, images and objects appear as portions of a lexicon and, in a more or less elementary way, carry the memory of their previous experience in other contexts while putting themselves at the service of a new and more complex installation. To use a metaphor that Harman himself derives from biological studies – and in particular from those on

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10 See G. Harman, *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything* (London: Penguin Random House, 2018); and L.R. Bryant, *The Democracy of Objects* (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, University of Michigan, 2011).

“symbiosis” by the scholar Lynn Margulis –<sup>11</sup> Prouvost’s installations behave like aggregations of cells that come together to produce compound objects that always have a degree of structural complexity higher than that of the materials that compose them.

Moreover, the OOO brings the concept of flat-ontology (an equal ontology); every entity of reality – regardless of its human, non-human, imaginary nature – contributes without any hierarchy to the construction of the new compound object. Therefore, as in the most abstract philosophy, “humans, animals, inanimate matter and fictional characters all equally exist,”<sup>12</sup> in Prouvost’s installations sculptures, video-art, sounds, lights, and even human and animal bodies contribute to the formation of an expanded composition. Based on the democratic outcomes of this confrontation between objects, now the observers feel immersed in the body of this “phantastic and abstract” animal. Acting as a prey inside the stomach of an octopus, they lose their identity and become similar to the objects, or at least, coexist with them.<sup>13</sup> It does not seem rash to argue that, in these circumstances, even the spectator appears as an object among objects. Moving in space, the viewer is led to relate to the objects of the composition, to physically embrace the surreality placed before them and, finally, in carrying out this operation, to become part of the composition, or so to speak, to dive “viscously” among objects.

### **Installations as hyper-enactments**

The use of the term “viscous” is not accidental. It is in fact one of the adjectives that the philosopher Timothy Morton – a colleague of Harman and one of the first

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11 Harman explicitly refers to Lynn Margulis’ research, which describes “symbiosis” as “the system in which members of different species live in physical contact.” See L. Margulis, *Symbiotic Planet: A New Look at Evolution* (London: Phoenix, 2001): 7; and G. Harman, *Object-Oriented Ontology*: 111.

12 G. Harman, *Object-Oriented Ontology*: 55.

13 It is to point out that the spectators are asked to stay and sit in specific places within the installation space. In any case, they assume a particular point of view to watch the videos, and they wear a mask to view the objects and the space. This means that they might appear as an object among others, following the artist’s intention, but in terms of reception, they might be part of a more complex interplay of movements, regards and subjectivity processes.

supporters of the OOO – uses to describe his “hyperobjects:”<sup>14</sup> those entities widely distributed in time and space which, thanks to the union of portions of smaller objects, have become so big, “hyper” indeed, that they are everywhere: above and, mainly, among us. In the ecological aspects of his discussion, Morton defines as hyperobjects concepts such as “global warming,” “the biosphere,” the “sum of all nuclear material on earth” and so on: objects or phenomena that are “‘hyper’ in relation to some other entity, whether they are directly manufactured by humans or not.”<sup>15</sup> They are therefore very specific entities and apparently very different from art installations.

And yet, his proposal has structural foundations close to those of the OOO and which are well suited to analyzing smaller scale objects such as art pieces; with increasing frequency they are created thanks to the use of heterogeneous physical or human materials and capable of establishing connections so wide in terms of composition as to provide the sensation of enveloping the viewer.

The composition of *Deep See Blue Surrounding You* is an example of the dynamics just described. Prouvost’s work is not a hyperobject in Morton’s terms (even if the environmental issues in which she believes do not differ from those addressed by the American philosopher), but it can be defined as a *mis-en-scène* (“enactment”) which, due to its degree of compositional complexity can derive from the theory of the American philosopher, at least as regards the prefix “hyper.” A terminological intuition, the latter, which also seems to be confirmed by the words used by Massimiliano Gioni to describe the practice of the French artist. Indeed, when Prouvost invited him to write about it in the *Deep See Blue Surrounding You* catalogue, the Italian curator declared: “she cultivates an excess of

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14 T. Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

15 Ibid.: 1.

storytelling that flourishes in a constant hyper-connectivity of characters and situations.”<sup>16</sup>

The concept of hyper-enactment proposed here,<sup>17</sup> in fact, would not only describe a creative staging which, like the OOO, plans to bring together “objects” and “references” so heterogeneous as to make a univocal orientation among them almost impossible; it would also denote a chaotic abundance of materials and narratives which, as Gioni also claims, is functional in structuring the conceptual surreality desired by the artist. Prouvost’s hyper-enactments are, in fact, “streams of consciousness”<sup>18</sup> where “things are broken and cut. Stories and narratives spiral out of control – digressing laterally in a constant flow of free associations.”<sup>19</sup>

In this compositional context, as already shown by the description of the *Deep See Blue Surrounding You* exhibition itinerary, the viewer moves between the objects and the narratives of the stream of consciousness developing so-called interobjective links<sup>20</sup> and, in a “viscous” way, becomes part of them in an attempt to understand them. To use the image that the philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre introduces in *Being and Nothingness* (1943) – and that Morton takes up again in his work – in these cases the spectator experiences the sensation of a hand dipped in honey:<sup>21</sup> thus merging with the surrounding objects thanks to the reciprocal relationships (aesthetic or semantic) established with that material. In fact, it is only this degree of extreme immersion that allows the visitor to understand the composition and to develop with its materials what

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16 M. Gioni, “Fata Morgana,” in M. Kirszenbaum, ed., *Laure Prouvost: Deep See Blue Surrounding You / Vois ce bleu profonde te fondre* (Paris: Institut Français, 2019, exhibition catalogue): 252-254, 252.

17 I have extensively explored the subject in the context of my doctoral thesis. See S. Mudu, *Re-/ Over- / Hyper-enactments: Strategie di riattivazione nelle produzioni artistiche contemporanee*, a Thesis in Visual Culture Presented in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Università Iuav, Venice (2022). <https://hdl.handle.net/11578/319396>, accessed December 13, 2022.

18 M. Gioni, “Fata Morgana:” 253.

19 Ibid.: 253.

20 T. Morton, *Hyperobjects*: 1.

21 Morton openly quotes Sartre pointing out that “we are stuck to hyperobjects, as if they enacted Sartre’s nightmare, ‘the sugary death of the For-itself,’ evoked when I plunge my hand into a jar of honey.” See T. Morton, *Hyperobjects*: 180.



Harman calls “metaphorical relations:”<sup>22</sup> the ability that an object possesses to identify with another without obvious similarities, to join it and, in doing so, to create a new, more complex reality.

In *Deep Sea Blue Surrounding you* the human experiences a system of expanded human and more-than-human (even imaginary) relationships and renegotiates its claims to supremacy and autonomy. By crossing the “porous threshold”<sup>23</sup> of the installation they immerse themselves in what Morton calls “symbiotic real:”<sup>24</sup> a *whole* “in which entities [human and nonhuman] are related in a non-total, ragged way.”<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, it does not seem out of place to underline how it is Prouvost herself who involves the viewer in this diving game. Thanks to the structure of her particular video-performance objects, the artist communicates directly with the observer using the second person: she asks them to follow clues and instructions to reconstruct the narrative in which the spectator is immersed; she constantly puts them to the test with effects of doubling, repetition and manipulation that modify the shape and meaning of the entire visual composition.

Also using “words and language as found objects,”<sup>26</sup> Prouvost builds a “*hyper-communication*”<sup>27</sup> that accompanies the viewer to abandon the condition of “subject” and embrace that of “object”, one among many others around. To put it in the words that the artist uses in the aforementioned video-performance *Dit Learn*, the viewers are destined “to become the seat [they are] sat on.”<sup>28</sup>

Using an eloquent image extrapolated from the last moments of *They Parlaient Idéale* (Fig. 7), thus, the visitor who approaches *Deep Sea Blue Surrounding You* and other works by Prouvost is required to jump into an

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22 G. Harman, *Object-Oriented Ontology*: 119.

23 R. Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Politi Press, 2013): 131

24 T. Morton, *Humankind. Solidarity with Nonhuman People* (London: Verso, 2017): 13.

25 Ibid.

26 M. Gioni, “Fata Morgana:” 254.

27 Ibid.

28 Original formulation: “to become the seat you are sat on,” taken from the script of *Dit Learn*, published in N. Haq, “Laure Prouvost’s Lexicon of Ambiguity:” 11.

alternative reality. Here, among images and objects of various kinds, the spectator will abandon the surface of things – what they seem to be – to float in a sprawling world that helps illuminate what they really are. Or, perhaps, they may be in an alternate reality: a sur-reality.



Fig. 7 – Laure Prouvost, *They Parlaient Idéale*, 2019, HD Video, 28 min 30 sec (video still) © Laure Prouvost, Courtesy Lisson Gallery, Carlier | Gebauer, and Galerie Nathalie Obadia.

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