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# Spectatorial boredom. Aesthetic rehabilitation of extended temporalities

## Abstract:

Although boredom experienced as a spectator is generally not considered valuable, this text aims to demonstrate the advantages of spectatorial boredom, particularly as a defense against the public's desire for profitability. The only way to deal with a slow rhythm of spectatorial experience – and, specifically, spectatorial boredom – is to accept the fact that it is impossible to see everything. The aesthetic experience of extended times are therefore humble ones: they left behind the pretense of being attentive to everything, they break with any hope of spectatorial profitability.

## Keywords:

Aesthetics, boredom, spectatorial experience, empathy

## Resumo:

Embora o tédio vivenciado como espectador geralmente não seja considerado valioso, este texto visa demonstrar as vantagens do tédio espetatorial, particularmente como uma defesa contra o desejo do público por lucratividade. A única maneira de lidar com o ritmo lento da experiência espetatorial – e, especificamente, com o tédio espetatorial – é aceitar o facto de que é impossível ver tudo. As experiências estéticas de tempos prolongados são, portanto, humildes: elas deixam de lado a pretensão de estar atentas a tudo, rompem com qualquer esperança de lucratividade espetatorial.

## Palavras-chave:

Estética, tédio, experiência do espectador, empatia

## Introduction

Many videos by amateur and professional entomologists show insect molting in fast motion. In a matter of seconds, we see stick insects and mantises emerge from their exuviae and, in some cases, spread their wings. These videos are fascinating and are undoubtedly watched more often than their longer versions, in which the image seems frozen. Does this mean that molting is more worth watching thanks to a device that allows us to speed up time? Is there any point in watching molting in real time, even if it means getting bored? Those who have taken the time to watch a stick insect molts or a spider spins its web would probably say that experiencing extended temporalities is aesthetically interesting, even when we get bored, precisely because the experience of watching is accompanied by an experience of time.

Drawing on the work of Jan Slaby (Slaby 2010) on Heideggerian thought and that of Lars Svendsen (Svendsen 2005), Peter Levine considers that “Boredom enables this awareness by focusing explicit attention on time” (Levine 2023). Boredom thus seems to be a privileged way of taking care of time. However, not every lapse in concentration is a sign of boredom: for example, the worker who acts mechanically, as described by Henri Bergson (Bergson 1911a), is not bored. He does not pay attention to the passing of time. He no longer pays attention to anything: neither his mechanical work, nor time, nor himself. Far from being a mechanical state, boredom is specific to living beings and, after being criticized, notably by Seneca (Seneca 2017), the notion has been rehabilitated. Admittedly, most rehabilitations of boredom involve metaphysical or existential considerations. However, boredom has also been discussed as a rejection of production (Adorno 1991). The separation between labour time and free time (related to leisure) disturbs Theodor W. Adorno. Thus, he sees boredom as an emanation of the cultural industries. In line with this, Hartmut Rosa suggests that the acceleration of the world will eliminate boredom (Rosa 2013).

Many artists work slowly and idly (Lontrade 2020), preferring long periods of time to profitability. The poetic virtues of boredom and extended temporalities have already been extensively studied and discussed. However, few texts have reflected on the aesthetic virtues of boredom, on the value of being bored when viewing works of art. This is the direction that this text wishes to take. The spectatorial boredom discussed here is therefore not the same as Adorno's: it is not boredom linked to inactivity, which can be eliminated by any entertainment, but boredom caused by a cultural activity, in this case an artistic activity, that one does not wish to interrupt. The observation that prompted this reflection is that there is often a gap, a disconnect, between slow works of art (or works produced slowly) and the attitude we adopt as viewers of these works. Adorno's idleness and spectatorial boredom could have been closely linked; one might have thought that a slow work would idle. However, this is not the situation, particularly among expert attitudes. On the contrary, taking care of time by slowing down the temporality of works is paradoxically accompanied by the idea that being even more attentive to all the details than before is now possible. We then ignore the important question of whether this increased attention is desirable. However, as a result, the deceleration of the work is paradoxically accompanied by a surge in activity that does

not stop. On the contrary, we must ask ourselves to what extent it is possible to maintain a dilettantish, nonchalant, even casual spectatorial posture. With nuance and caution, this text aims to defend the hypothesis that inattentive boredom can be aesthetically fruitful, fruitful beyond the mere possibility of breaking the boredom.

To contextualize reflections on boredom, the first part focuses on what might be called, paraphrasing Lessing's "pregnant moment" (Lessing 1887), a pregnant boredom, that is, virtuous spectatorial boredom in that it allows for revelation. The second part aims to complement this aesthetic power of boredom by discussing the relationships of empathic projection stimulated by boredom. Finally, the last part discusses the value of having long, sometimes very long, reception times, sometimes much longer than the time spent in front of the work. This would offer the possibility of seeing spectatorial boredom as a possible bulwark against demanding cognitive activities in general and spectatorial overactivity in particular.

### I. Pregnant boredom

In the French collective work on boredom edited by Gérard Peylet, Élisabeth Magne is the only one to have explicitly written about the power of spectatorial boredom (Magne 2020). She starts from a real personal experience, namely a visit to an exhibition that bored her considerably – at least at first. Emphasizing the slow temporality of her disappointment and boredom, she recounts how the large photographs by Thomas Demand failed to interest her. They slipped over her with the same indifference described by Agnès Lontrade when she analyzes Duchampian indifference (Lontrade 2020: 85). However, there is one important difference: while Marcel Duchamp sought to elicit this aesthetic indifference in as many people as possible, Élisabeth Magne intuitively sensed that this was not Thomas Demand's objective. Élisabeth Magne is undoubtedly not the only person to have been bored at an exhibition, nor is she the only aesthetician to have felt that way. But she is perhaps one of the few who dares to admit it. Indeed, it is not considered acceptable to be bored in front of works of art. It even seems indefensible and disrespectful to say so. Yet artists such as Wagner saw no problem with his audience falling asleep during his operas (Dombois 2007). What enabled Élisabeth Magne to speak freely about this also stems from her deep conviction that the intensity of her boredom is what led to an equally intense revelation when she understood the artist's device, which at first glance seemed boring.<sup>1</sup> She thus defends the idea that "boredom is the antechamber of poetic revelation" (Magne 2020).

Boredom is therefore no longer so much the consequence of a negative situation as the cause of a positive event.<sup>2</sup> In other words, boredom is aesthetically pregnant in the sense that it will generate something, and in this case something positive. It is pregnant in the sense that Lessing speaks of a pregnant moment in his analysis of the spatial arts: the moment chosen to represent the action is not the most impressive, but it precedes the most impressive state, which is better accessed through imagination than through the perception of a representation frozen in time (Lessing 1887).

Thus, extending the parallel with Lessing, saying that boredom is pregnant or is the antechamber of revelation implies that boredom itself is not positive. It is merely an unpleasant situation that makes something else possible, just as Edmund Burke says of the sublime: the suspension of the powers of action and reasoning does not produce positive pleasure, but rather delight, namely the diminution of displeasure, a relief (Burke 1757). Élisabeth Magne might agree with this reductive analysis of the power of boredom: in fact, everyone who was already familiar with Thomas Demand's work received it completely differently. Boredom is not necessary to appreciate it. At a pinch, one could say that boredom is mentally dreamt of by people who are familiar with his work as a possible spectatorial state: if they did not know the artist's device, they would have found it boring, they would have been bored, but in fact they are not bored. The reason for the inhibition of any boredom stems from the fact that the artist's approach is very time-consuming: Thomas Demand has invested a great deal of time and energy in creating his works. But, just like the imagined moment described by Lessing, this time is only represented mentally by the audience who are aware of the device; the long time is not experienced by the audience (and there is no good reason why it should be). Such boredom is therefore only partially and immediately rehabilitated – and that was undoubtedly not Thomas Demand's intention. However, Thomas Demand does something that can work towards a rehabilitation of long periods of time and, step by step, of boredom: he rehabilitates, both artistically and aesthetically, the generally pejorative judgment: “all that for this.”

In a different artistic context, Morgan Labar demonstrated the positive value of the judgment “all that for this” by showing how certain artists (for example Paul McCarthy or Mike Kelley) can deploy colossal resources to produce a work that amounts to nothing more than a teenage joke, a ridiculous work (Labar 2024: 248–252). In a temporal context, “all that for this” can also positively be applied to classical vanities: it is because so much time has been devoted to the meticulous painting of a still life that it exemplifies the vanity of the world. But here again, as with Roman Opałka's paintings, the audience can only mentally imagine the time spent. So why not use this filter to analyze the reception of slow and boring works? Personally, I was not particularly impressed by the plot of Vadim Perelman's 2021 film *Persian Lessons*. I enjoyed watching the film, admittedly, but it seemed long to me. However, the ending of the film gave me the impression that this length was necessary. It would have been preferable not to reveal anything about the film, but the ideal of understanding theoretical hypotheses compels me to comment: in short, during World War II, a Jewish man escapes the fate reserved for his fellow Jews in the camp where he was taken prisoner by pretending to be Persian, knowing that a German officer needed Persian lessons. The prisoner then invents a language based on the register of people entering and leaving. He tries hard to memorize all the names so as not to make mistakes in the fictional vocabulary he has invented. The film is therefore necessarily very repetitive, like language lessons. It can be boring to watch. The audience's attention wanders. One may feel a little uncomfortable and taken aback by the prisoner's ruse to avoid dying, knowing that he is surrounded by people who will soon die. We

are probably bored because we feel we have figured out the film and seen it all before it ends.

This hypothesis is in line with Alain Milon's analysis, which describes boredom not as "a form of inactivity but as something that exhausts action" (Milon 2020). At least, in the case of *Persian Lessons*, it is only the illusion of having exhausted the action. Indeed, at the end of the war, when officials are trying to find out the identities of the people who passed through the camp, the fake Persian teacher can help: all the words in his fictional vocabulary correspond to the names of the people held in the camp. In retrospect, all the time spent listening to Persian lessons makes sense. All that boredom becomes relevant, and we could not have imagined the same relevance without having been bored. The main character in the film becomes similar to Roman Opałka, who counted the victims of the camps one by one. The Polish artist had the foresight to suggest different ways of experiencing his work: listening to his sound recordings allows us to experience the long duration of his work, while viewing his paintings only allows us to imagine it mentally. However, no one has probably listened to all his recordings.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, those reading these lines are in the same position as Élisabeth Magne in front of Thomas Demand's photographs or the audience in front of Roman Opałka's paintings: a certain boredom in reading the summary of the film may certainly give way to the understanding that there is a moment of revelation, but the long duration has not been phenomenologically experienced in the same way as by those who have seen the entire film or who, let us suppose, have listened to all of Roman Opałka's sound recordings.<sup>4</sup>

## II. Boredom and self-projection

This section is based on the assumption that boredom, due to the drowsiness it induces in the body, promotes empathic identification. Indeed, if we accept empathy as the ability to project oneself into the body of another, empathic projection is all the easier and more effective when one's own body is numb or dormant, whether through languor or boredom. The relevance of Raymond Bellour's analysis of hypnosis in cinema is not unrelated to this observation (Bellour 2009): the effacement of the spectator's body promotes certain experiences of immersion and identification.

I had the opportunity to experience this phenomenon firsthand while watching Harun Farocki's 2007 film *Respite*. I happened to have seen and presented this film in movie theaters about twenty times to teenagers (as part of a partnership between an art center, a cinema, and schools). It is a 40-minute silent black-and-white film, whose only images are archive footage – rushes – shot during World War II by a prisoner, Rudolf Breslauer, in the Westerbork transit camp and then edited by Harun Farocki. The film was never completed by the prisoner, who was deported to another camp – an extermination camp – before he could finish it. Consequently, while the film's format (silent, black and white, etc.) tends to bore school audiences in advance, its context resonates as a categorical imperative to pay attention. It would be indecent not to. Yet I saw many vacant stares, half-closed eyes; I also found myself zoning out at times, experiencing absences in the same way that certain forms of epilepsy manifest themselves through frequent absences during which the epileptic

individual loses awareness of the passage of time. Paul Virilio used the term “picnolepsy” (literally “frequently seized”) in his essay on disappearance to describe this symptom as a way of resisting the passage of time, which sometimes passes too quickly, but also sometimes too slowly, as during breakfast (1991: 10).

However, once again, this boredom seems almost artistically constructed and proves to be aesthetically relevant. The film is in fact in two parts. The first presents life in the camps more or less as Rudolf Breslauer filmed it, without highlighting what we now know about those camps. A strangeness arises from this discrepancy, which could possibly explain the distance taken and the boredom. In the second part, the same images are shown again, but with the help of intertitles, attention is drawn to a double reading of the images that already foreshadowed the horror. For example, a watchtower was visible during the gymnastics scenes. More disturbingly, the images of prisoner-workers stripping cables suddenly evoked scenes of human dismemberment. It was at this moment that half-closed eyes widened the most: physical drowsiness due to boredom then encouraged empathic identification with these cables. Precisely as when Friedrich Theodor Vischer described the special empathetic relationship that a subject can have with an object, using the German term *Einfühlung*, saying that the sensitive self slips into the forms of the perceived object “as into a frock, or rather as into one’s own body” (Vischer/Yanacek, 2015: 439), we find ourselves, faced with these scenes of stripped cables, dismembered along with them.

Although this text does not seek to define a corpus, it would have been surprising not to mention Chantal Ackerman’s cinema in a reflection on boredom, and in particular on the empathetic relationship between audience boredom and what is shown on screen. Let us therefore consider *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*, made in 1975. There is no need to expand on the points previously highlighted, which also apply to this film: yes, boredom encourages revelation, in this case murder; yes, without having experienced the *longueurs*, without having been bored, without having zoned out during certain scenes, the break in rhythm would not have been perceived in the same way. However, it is not this power of boredom that we wish to highlight through this film. Here again, I am drawing on my personal experience, which I am trying to convey. If I think that the boredom experienced while watching *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* is not only related to the antechamber of revelation (Magne 2020), it is because, when I remember my experience of watching the film, I remember my boredom more than the moment of revelation. People may think of lapses in attention, scenes of washing dishes, cooking, running errands: those moments of everyday life. More specifically, it is in these moments of our own daily lives that we think of this film; we think of Chantal Ackerman’s cinema when we find ourselves engaged in a mechanical activity, as if her films were a bulwark against the numbing of consciousness pointed out by Henri Bergson. We thus enjoy the work especially after having experienced it.

In a short text devoted to idleness, Dominique Noguès focuses on the time after the work is done, when the artist has finished his work and delivered his piece (Noguès 2009: 94). He notes the change in rhythm from acceleration to calm. This artistic conception of

idleness can undoubtedly be adapted to a spectatorial conception. We are idle when we have finished viewing a work of art. It is when we are idle, in the sense that the experience of the work of art is over, and we are engaged in a mechanical (and everyday) activity that boredom takes on meaning. Paradoxically, the boredom experienced during the film colors the many experiences of boredom that we will have afterwards. People who, like me, watched the film at home in the early evening may not have taken long to experience the boredom of idleness: once the film is over, tired both by the pace and by the harsh reality of the situation of the woman portrayed by Chantal Ackerman, we turn off the TV and... do the dinner dishes. It is at this moment, just after the end of the film, that we seem to adopt the best viewing posture, as if we were never completely idle from a spectatorial point of view.

The point here is not to conclude on the fact that the examples given in this section and the previous one largely relate to the atrocities of World War II, even though it is clear that demanding spectatorial experiences, beyond boredom, have found a kind of legitimacy in these works. Beyond these questions, what emerges from these powers of boredom is a questioning of the clichés we might say and hear when talking about a very long exhibition or a very long film: “It’s very long, but it’s not boring at all”, as if managing to do something long without getting bored were in itself an achievement. Clearly, this statement assumes, at the very least, that it would have been detrimental to be bored and that it is better not to be bored. This idea underlies Alain Mons’s statement: “Of course, there may be boring films about boredom, but that’s not the point, because such a subject can also be fascinating” (Mons 2020). While acknowledging the boredom present in Chantal Ackerman’s films, he contrasts boring with fascination, as if boredom could not make a film fascinating. All these preconceptions remain to be discussed and, no doubt, deconstructed. Furthermore, theories that criticize entertainment – that is to say what is put in place by the cultural industries to keep us from getting bored (and to encourage consumption) – should make room for the right to be bored when viewing works of art, even if they are not intended to entertain. This is the direction that the last part hopes to tackle.

### III. Long periods of time as a bulwark against spectatorial hyperactivity

Aesthetics, a term coined in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by Baumgarten in an attempt to defend the interest of the concept of confusion in philosophy, is inherently confronted with reversals of values. In addition to the rehabilitation of confusion, since the 18<sup>th</sup> century and particularly since the French Revolution, another reversal of values has been underway: liberalism has already appropriated the notion of freedom, even in its name, and the economy has misused the terms action and speculation. There is also an ongoing reversal of the value of experience since experience has become a commodity (Miles 2021). Conversely, this is not to say that inaction is the only way to resist neoliberal societies: inaction has no value in itself. The same is true of slowing down: once slow food, for example, becomes a commercial product, it loses its subversive power. The same is true of other forms of slowing down, such as the meditation exercises promoted by videos on social media funded by the various opportunities offered

by the content platform. In light of these various observations, it is no longer absurd to ask whether boredom can be rehabilitated, not only aesthetically – if aesthetics alone has any meaning – but also ethically.

Films that move too quickly tire the viewer's attention; it is impossible to pay attention to everything. It is easy to slip into a superficial mode of viewing that makes watching feel too much like entertainment. Or else you have to watch and rewatch to claim some expertise in this kind of works. Conversely, slow-paced works seem to lend themselves more easily to perception; you are able to see all the details. One could thus strangely become an expert on *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* after watching it just once. In this respect, slow-paced works are reassuring, particularly for critics and academic research: they do not resemble entertainment and lend themselves easily to expertise, provided one makes the effort to pay attention.

It is precisely this kind of preconception that seems worth questioning. The mere fact that it is possible to pay attention to everything does not mean that it is preferable to pay attention to everything. The expert attitude, in the sense of not letting anything slip by, is not always the right one. Not only does this kind of spectatorial posture make boredom impossible, as we force ourselves to be attentive to everything, but it also tends to encourage over-interpretation: from over-attention to over-interpretation, there is only one cognitive step that is difficult not to take. Without agreeing with his conclusions, I think that Dickie is not wrong to speak of the “myth” of aesthetic attention (Dickie 1964). Indeed, while it is true that studies on aesthetic attention do not confuse attentional quality with attentional quantity, it is no less true that Stolnitz and Beardsley do not use examples of wandering and distracted attention (Stolnitz 1960: 32–42; Beardsley 1969). Why cannot we defend the hypothesis that *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Brussels* is actually best experienced while doing something else, or at least while letting one's mind wander to other things? What matters more than watching the film attentively is letting the film inhabit the environment in which it is being viewed. Paying attention to the temporality of works does not necessarily mean devoting full attention to them.

Being attentive to, in the sense of being focused on, is also a behavior valued by neoliberal societies. I have already presented this idea in a text comparing the state of alertness to the state of distraction in order to develop an aesthetic and ethical critique of concentration (Trentini 2020). In short, it highlights that production conditions, productivity, and therefore profit depend on workers' ability to focus on their tasks. Even if they are multitasking, they are expected to remain focused only on their various tasks. I am well aware that this idea is paradoxical, given that it does not seem to apply to lifestyles outside of work, where, it is said, fewer and fewer people are able to remain focused on a single activity (reading a book, for example), but their distraction is only apparent: they do not have diffuse and alert attention, they simply multiply their focused attention, thus preparing themselves for multitasking activities. Not being focused, being alert, being distracted, means being potentially attentive regardless of a set of specifications.

If we accept the hypothesis that certain works require diffuse attention (Nanay 2016: 12–35), there is no reason to exclude the possibility that this diffuse attention can be extracted from the sole framework of the work. Thus, those watching *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* from their small apartment have everything to gain by letting their gaze rest on the sink and on the stove in their kitchen or even wondering for a moment what they will make for dinner. These theoretical hypotheses may seem disrespectful to the work and/or the artist, but there is no good reason why they should be disrespectful, nor why they should be excluded from aesthetic reflection. If necessary, these questions could be legitimized by pointing out that Kantian aesthetics contains similar hypotheses. Philosophical tradition positively invokes Kantian disinterest to speak of pragmatic suspension and desingularization. When disinterest is mentioned in relation to detachment, it is most often done in a critical manner, particularly with regard to moral issues. But the detachment inherent in Kantian disinterest can be interpreted differently: of course, one must see the tulip with one's own eyes to find it beautiful, but one must not scrutinize it meticulously. Kantian taste judgment does not hold up well to someone who counts the petals of a tulip: one must see it as a whole, immediately. If one pays too much attention to it, one inhibits any possibility of reflective judgment (Kant 1987 §2, 6, 33).

It would be wrong to conclude from the preceding remarks that Kantian aesthetics aims to devalue focused attitudes, but it is interesting to note that it is indeed compatible with more casual attitudes. These reflections have sometimes led me to wonder whether one could defend the posture of a casual spectator. Baldesar Castiglione not only defined *Sprezzatura* but also showed the relevance of this attitude (Castiglione 2002). After him, numerous texts have shown the proximity that can exist between *Sprezzatura* and artistic activity: artists can be distracted (Bergson 1911b), idle (Lontrade 2020), casual (Vouilloux 2008), but can spectators in turn be distracted, idle, and casual? These questions undoubtedly need to be addressed separately and are probably too complex to be answered within the scope of this text, but one of the challenges here is to formulate these questions as legitimate aesthetic questions. Not only do the viewers also have the right to take their time, but there are certainly works that require a long time to appreciate.

In his five nonchalant notes on idleness, Dominique Noguès writes about the long periods of time artists spend on their work, drawing on his own experience with the help of a beautiful image. He suggests:

conceive of one's work table as a cook's stove (I like this metaphor, it is the most accurate) where works of different natures and deadlines are cooked or simmered, in the oven, in a double boiler, on the hotplates, over high or low heat (Noguès 2009: 95)

In line with the approach taken so far, the question that arises is to what extent this image can be transposed to the experience of reception, to spectatorial experiences. Does it make sense to say that we are spectators of several works at once with different temporalities? The

idea of an artist maturing a work over many years while creating others alongside is easy to understand, but are there works that await their spectatorial reception? The question is not historical or cultural; it is not a matter of talking about pioneering and avant-garde works. The question is an individual one: are there works that we have seen but not yet exhausted, works that haunt us because they resist us? Formulated in this way, this hypothesis resembles common hypotheses of artistic reception, particularly Adorno's aesthetics. According to him the "truth content of artworks cannot be immediately identified" (Adorno 2002: 129); artworks are unsolved enigma. Adorno sees in the enigmaticalness of the artworks its ability to fight against utilitarianism, to escape commodification and the possibility of consumption. To repeat Noguès' metaphor, following Adorno, it is even the very nature of the spectatorial experience of artworks to leave them simmering without ever being fully cooked. Spectatorial boredom can then be established as a new bulwark against the cultural forms of neoliberalism, particularly the consumption of art.

The long-time viewer is never idle; any experience of a work of art requires a long time, a very long time even. We continue to be viewers of Chantal Ackerman's cinema while doing the dishes; we may resonate more deeply with this work on the day we break a cup because we were distracted by thoughts of the film, on the day we deliberately disrupt the rhythm of our day, or on the day the rhythm is disrupted despite ourselves. Taking care of spectatorial time is not only about savoring the passing of time, it is also about allowing the past to return and linger.

## Conclusion

Echoing the slow spectacle of stick insect molting that introduced this text, it seems fitting to conclude with my first long spectatorial experience: Valeria Vaccaro's *Marmiferi*.

I discovered the work of artist Valeria Vaccaro at the Montrouge's *Salon des jeunes créations européennes* more than ten years ago. She creates sculptures out of Carrara marble, and I was particularly taken with her pile of matches. The matches are much larger than conventional matches, each measuring over 60 cm in length and weighing several kilograms. It so happened that my friends and family clubbed together to buy me two matches for my birthday (at that time, Valeria Vaccaro was making them to order). The problem of delivery remained: given the weight and the fragility of the objects, the cost of transport was very high. As I was still struggling financially at the time, I decided to go and collect them myself in Italy: I carried a huge, heavy wooden crate at arm's length through various train stations; everyone thought I was transporting a dangerous reptile. Since then, two giant Carrara marble matches have been sitting in my home, regularly surprising anyone new who comes to visit. Not exactly: one match broke in two four years ago following an uncontrolled impact: the fairly thin burnt part just below the burnt head of the match broke off. Cleanly. I was very sad at first, but this second shock only lasted a few seconds. Quite quickly, this accident renewed my spectatorial experience, which had been simmering on the back burner all this time – to borrow Dominique Noguès' metaphor. All the attention I had devoted to these matches over

the past ten years and all the care I had taken to dust them, without risking breaking these objects that mimic the moment when a wooden match disintegrates, had suddenly taken on meaning. The match was truly fragile; that was now a fact. Grains of marble left the cut surface and formed a small pile on the piece of furniture where it had been placed; the match resembled an eroding mountain. This moment of breakage, when the ephemeral work became a reality, marked the moment when my simmering spectatorial dish was finally ready.

More succinctly, accepting a slow pace of spectatorial experience and, in particular, accepting spectatorial boredom can only be done by accepting not to see everything, by accepting to miss certain things and finding a way to enjoy a gaze that does not see everything, that is lacking. As a result, spectators are forced to abandon the preconceived notion that they can pay attention to everything. They also stop valuing the desire to see everything and miss nothing.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> I will leave it up to the reader to read his text or find out more about the artist. For those in a hurry, here is a brief summary: the exhibition featured photographs of spaces that appeared devoid of interest and life, spaces where nothing seemed to have happened, so pristine were they. However, the artist does not photograph places that already exist but recreates iconic places on a 1:1 scale in his studio using cardboard and paper. Once you know where you are or realize what is going on, boredom gives way to the fun of finding clues. Élisabeth Magne mentions a poorly cut piece of cardboard here or a warped sheet of paper there. The artist is not a photographer; he is first and foremost a sculptor. Élisabeth Magne discusses the Thomas Demand exhibition presented at the Fondation Cartier in 2000–2001.

<sup>2</sup> In his text, Alain Milon discusses boredom specifically not as a consequence, but as a cause (Milon 2020).

<sup>3</sup> It could be considered an artistic performance in itself to do so.

<sup>4</sup> L'expression I do not think it is a matter of revelation in the sense of a surprise: in my opinion, people who have not seen the film but have read this summary may still be moved by the ending. I would be delighted to hear your thoughts on this, if you have any.

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