



Judith Barry, *All the light that's ours to see*, 2020. Installation view at Lumiar Cité, in Lisbon.
 Courtesy of the artist and Maumaus/Lumiar Cité. © DMF.

All the light that's ours to see, by Judith Barry

BY BARBARA VALENTINA

NOVEMBER 4, 2020

The cinema was invented, and new spaces appeared, casting shadows with light. Lustrous, celluloid ribbons unspooling, burning brightly, igniting us.”

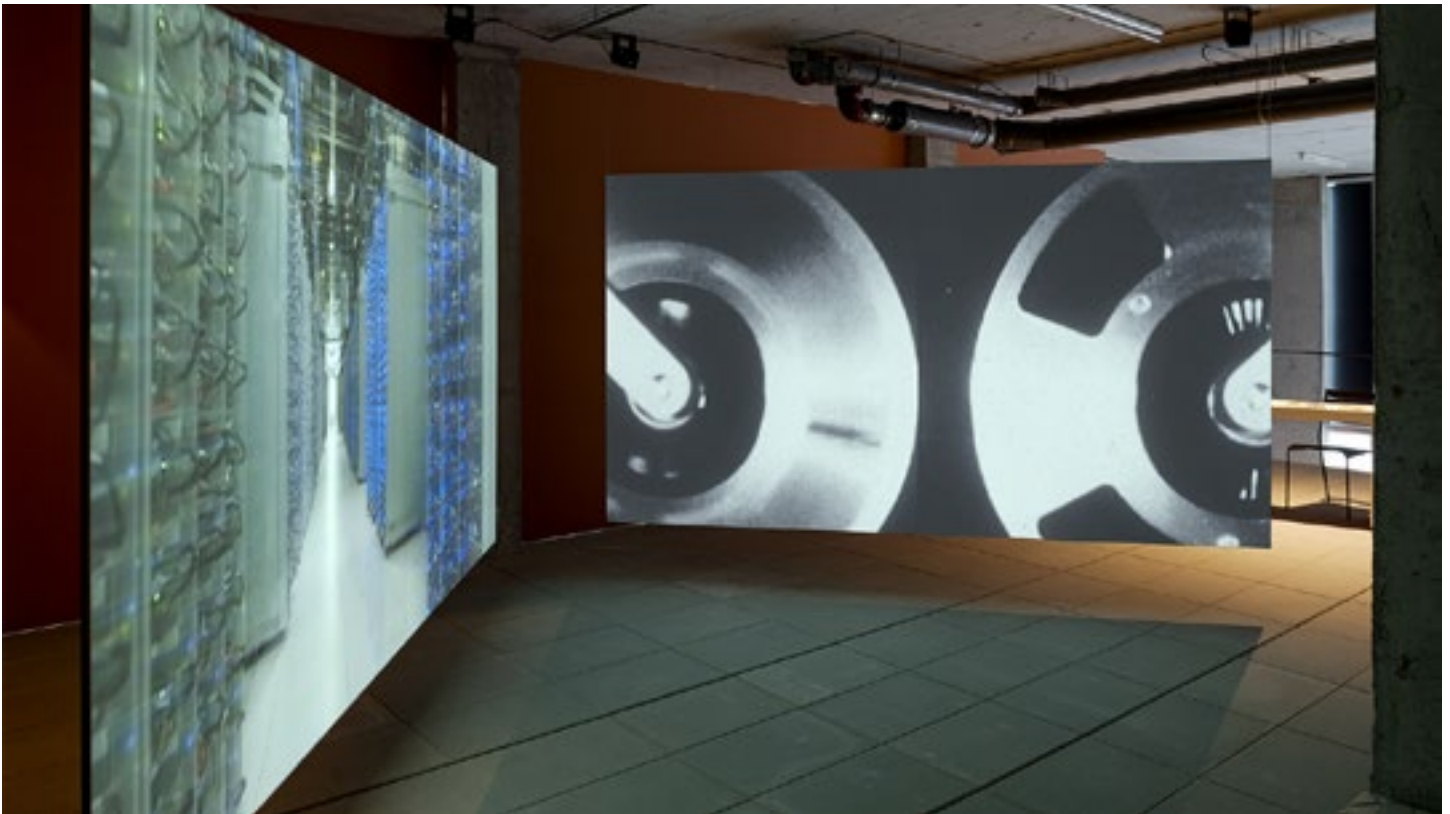
This is one of the sentences we can hear at Lumiar Cité, the exhibition venue of Associação Maumaus. Yet again transfigured to welcome Judith Barry and the world premiere of *All the lights that's ours to see*, with the dedicated and exciting curatorship of Jürgen Bock.

There is a basic narrative to this installation: Mondo Kim's was a video club chain in New York. With the flourishing of the digital world and streaming, it went bankrupt. Its owner loves cinema and, not wanting to say goodbye to his 55.000 or so movies, he ended up discovering in Sicily a village that made a library available to him to host his collection, located in an 18th-century monastery. At the gallery's entrance, we can watch a small documentary video, briefly explaining the story. With this documentary cornerstone, Barry creates a fictional narrative, in a detailed and well-accomplished montage.

All the light that's ours to see is a video installation on two screens, thus creating a common vanishing point. The latter is accentuated by the seating arrangement, where the visitors can take their place to watch the screening. They can also stand anywhere on the upper floor of Lumiar Cité. But this will affect the immersive experience provided by the peripheral vision and the choice of the screen to look at, when they are positioned frontally in relation to that vanishing point.

While we see images from Kim's collection and the building (there is a particular relationship between Judith and the architecture of all her work), with the shelves full of DVDs and VHS, superimposed images show us excerpts from films by directors like Fassbinder, Cassavetes, Fritz Lang, Tarkovsky, among others. And even images made with the famous panoramas of the beginning of the motion picture. Sometimes, we also see landscapes that free us from interior spaces, taking us to a wider exterior, where we can breathe.

The films have assumedly different supports. But sometimes Barry purposefully introduces grain and visual noise, creating



a differential in visual and sound texture. The effort of assembling and mixing sound is also essential to enjoy the work, which emerges under these very same conditions. The sound, both diegetic and extradiegetic, guides us and leaves us, as if taking us by the hand in a dance. The relationship between the two screens is quite particular, between different rhythms and scales. Sometimes, one of the screens is divided into a visual and sound cacophony, but never disorganized. The vanishing point created by the limits of the two screens causes the observer a dysphoric sensation of movement. At some moments, the images on the two screens are synchronous, but they end up moving away quickly, like a musical composition. This is the approach of the installation: a visual and sound composition to be experienced as a whole.

Lumiar Cité contributes to this almost operatic environment of the installation. The huge windows of the gallery were covered (something already commonplace), creating a more comfortable environment for this surrounding emersion. The

exhibition's screening is conducted by Ken Saylor, who has even transformed the reception desk, giving it a pattern equal to the Portuguese pavement, repeated on the upper floor on a table, where we can see some historical publications about cinema.

Judith manipulates our affections, the visual and sound memories. Sometimes, she introduces disruptive frames in the images, where film ghosts move to and fro on the shelves of Mondo Kim's, lost between the digital and the analogue. Sometimes, they're just frames, almost like film developing errors. In other cases, they are ghostly figures that populate the work, recalling the sensation that the spectators would have had when cinema first appeared: "But the main preceptive and intellectual novelty brought by cinema was the generalization of montage, and the possibility of chaining totally disparate images. (...) no one foresaw this experience, where one image suddenly replaces another, without warning, without transition, at the cost of a small visual trauma." [1]

But Judith Barry does not cause us visual or sound trauma. She guides us in a story, which is also ours, of a love for film, regardless of format, support or even where they are seen. While paying tribute to cinema and its memory, she questions the new ways of watching it, the collective experience as opposed to the individual experience – more intimate some will say, less emotionally plentiful others will claim. Cinema, in the past the great collective artistic experience, is now consigned to the small domestic experience of streaming.

[1] Aumont, Jacques, *A Imagem*, Lisboa: Edições Texto & Grafia, 2011, 3rd edition, p. 175.

