

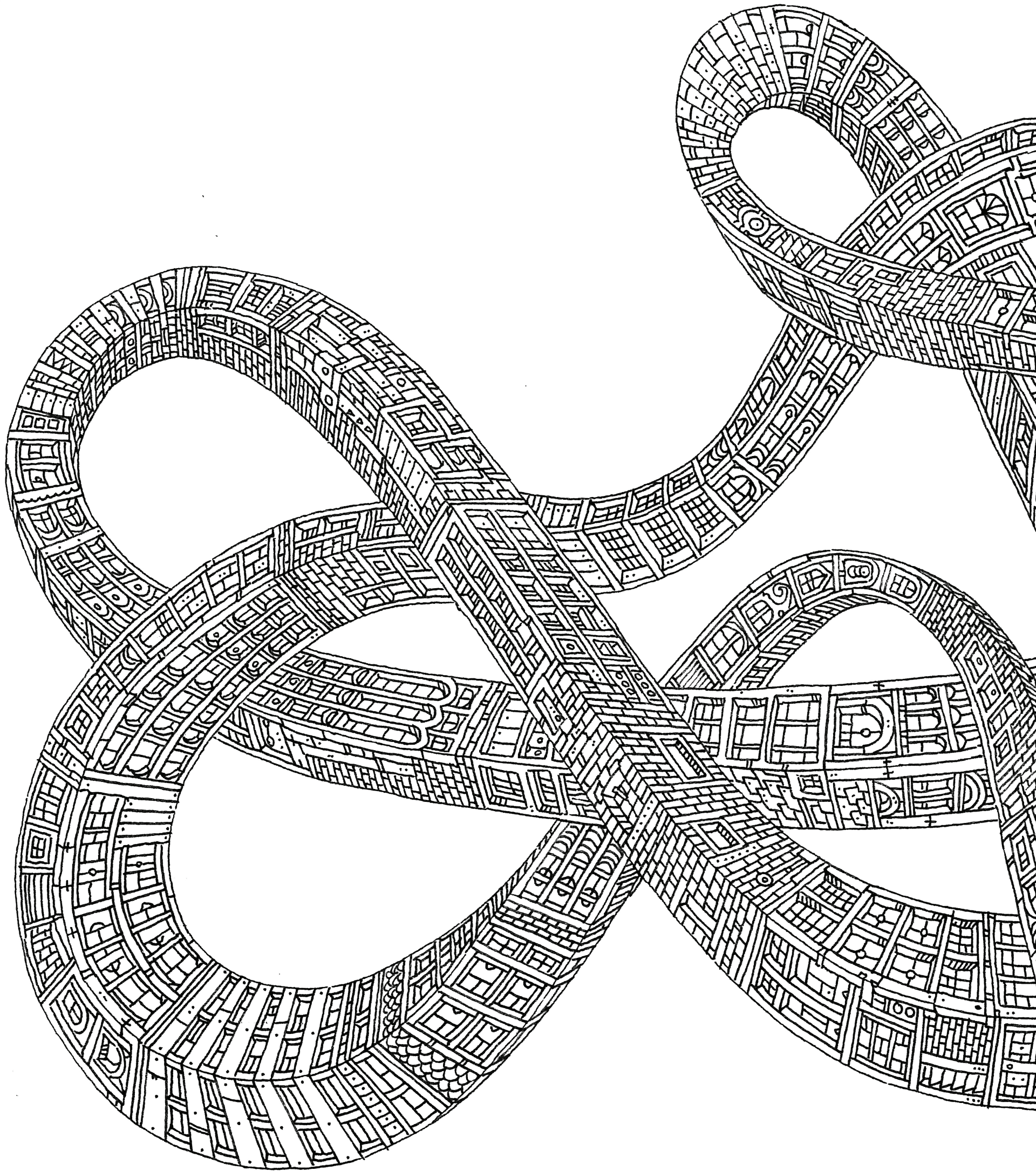
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LONDON REVIEWS

JULIO LE PARC AND PIPILOTTI RIST: SOMETHING IN THE EYE

BY ANAÏS BREMOND - @ANAISBREMOND

Upon seeing Julio Le Parc’s exhibition in Paris, Anaïs Brémond reflects on the similarities between the Argentinian optical artist and Swiss video artist Pipilotti Rist in their unconventional use of exhibition space. The sheer magnitude of Julio Le Parc’s exhibition, his kinetic art of giant mobiles and light sculptures reminded me of another artist, video and installation artist Pipilotti Rist. She was the subject of a massive show in London almost two years ago, turning the concrete rooms of the Hayward Gallery into a cosy cocoon as smooth and welcoming as a whale’s uterus.

Back to Le Parc’s exhibition: Progressing from a funfair-type hall of mirrors into the darkened hall of the Palais de Tokyo, the feeling of immersion is immediate. The shadows created by Le Parc’s light structures dance around the room, pass on your face, making you an active part of the art rather than a passive observer. Pipilotti Rist’s show made you feel the same, as you entered an organic world with travelling films that had you standing within the images. Now Le Parc and Rist do not share the same practices. Le Parc’s work experiments with painting, lighting and movement, including that of the observer. Rist is first and foremost a video artist. But both have strived to create new universes to draw all their viewers’ senses.

A STRANGER IN PARIS

UN CAFÉ S’IL VOUS PLAÎT

BY DANIEL SCHEFFLER

Searching for great, superbly wonderful coffee in Paris is like searching for a giraffe under the Atlantic Ocean. It’s just never going to happen. It’s just never going to happen.

Searching for great, superbly wonderful coffee in Paris is like searching for a giraffe under the Atlantic Ocean. It’s just never going to happen. Of course you can attempt this, armed with a wheel of Etorqi Basque cheese to sink you down but you realize it’s a total waste of Parisian time. The French believe that dark roasting (read: brûlé) or, shall we call it for what is actually happening, burning at 500 degrees fire the coffee makes it stronger and by implication tastier.

A noisette, sounding so wonderfully innocent, will attack your stomach lining with Joan of Arc’s feminist fury. And a Café Crème might thrill you with that fluffy handsome sounding name but what you’ll get is extra, extra one more time with feeling extra pasteurized milk that will last for a lifetime (ask me I left a bottle for three years in a cupboard in the Marais and it was still perfect when I opened it after a very long sojourner) and a tiny spot of, again, burnt coffee. Don’t bother with American drip coffee; the open jawed dismay from your ever friendly waitress will let you know that even if you do get the desired format it will

It is not fortuitous that Pipilotti Rist’s retrospective was called “The Eyeball Massage”. This type of practice bridges the gap between art and architecture – the ending of the art piece is no longer the frame, it is the gallery. This is particularly true in one of Julio Le Parc’s pieces, where his rainbow-like chromatic lines escape the frame and continue on ten canvases positioned around a semi-circular room.

From 1959 Julio Le Parc had already understood that an unconventional approach to exhibition space could be emancipatory for the public. He wanted to avoid a passive relation between the viewer and his objects, and establish a dynamic relation instead, depending on his “angle of vision”. Some of Le Parc’s pieces are hanging from the ceiling, and you can appreciate their broken shadows swirling above you while you lye on a square couch - something you would never get to experience standing up.

Pipilotti Rist shares the same vision: in “The Eyeball Massage”, one of her videos was projected at ground level on the wall of a miniature model home, inviting you to kneel down to watch it. Screening rooms were filled with beanbags, visitors welcomed to lie down and relax to experience her sensual, almost psychedelic films. This use of space enters the sphere of body politics, as visitors have to choose where to stand in relation to the art piece. They have to take “responsibility for their own perspective”.

Both make playful, total, encompassing art: art that leaves you no choice but feel. In a desacralizing move, the emphasis is shifted as much on the set up, the lighting, the clever use of the space than the art itself. From the burst of colours to the surprising shapes of light beams, Le Parc and Rist’s body of work is a feast for the eyes, a sensory treat. It’s art that celebrates what is within all of us: The pleasure to observe, to touch, to hear and to move. Beyond their inspiring pieces, they also create unique places you wish you could revisit. Still to this day, Julio Le Parc and Pipilotti Rist artworks remain stuck to my retina. ●

be more than disappointing and potentially rigged with some incendiary device. So what makes the French believe they have the world’s greatest coffee? Oh yes the use of a French press (the worst way in the world to make coffee unless you enjoy a strong acidity that is thin in flavor and thick in grossness). Of course the open display for pollution and car fumes to come sit on the too-old-for-use beans and invariably cheap machines may add to the dismay you’re feeling by now. So where did the great writers and artists get their caffeine rushes if Paris cannot deliver a decent roast or bean anyway (minus Telescope Café in 75001 that gets coffee from the U.S. of A.). Possibly at home, or then again maybe they got their kicks from opium, the beautiful scenery and architecture, the perfect people-watching everywhere or the most obvious - free flowing alcohol.

If you want great coffee in Paris make sure to drink Italian. C’est fucking vrai. ●