



Art Forum  
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Left: Mircea Cantor, *Nulle part ailleurs* (Nowhere else), 2000, three stills from a color video, 12 minutes. Below: Mircea Cantor, *Anxious Utility Vehicles* (detail), 2001, series of billboard posters, each 9' 10" x 13' 11".

FIRST TAKE

## Hans-Ulrich Obrist on MIRCEA CANTOR

BEFORE HE SHOWED UP IN FRANCE, MIRCEA CANTOR spent several years hitchhiking around Eastern Europe. Holding up a blank sign, he cadged rides from his native Transylvania to Cluj, Bucharest, Sibiu, Budapest. Throughout this peripatetic twenty-four-year-old Romanian artist's work (he's currently based in Nantes), travel emerges as a complex nexus of experience enabling a range of possibilities for resistance and innovation within—and against—encroaching global determinations.

In the exhibition "*Traversées/Crossings*," which I organized with Laurence Bossé at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Cantor presents two recent works. *Nulle part ailleurs* (Nowhere else), 2000, is a dizzying video projection based on purloined images of tourism facilities (surreptitiously lifted from travel-agency websites): generic hotels, swimming pools, country clubs, holiday villages. These sites—like the shopping malls and airport lounges that anthropologist Marc Augé has called "non-places"—tend to be interchangeable despite their disparate locations and reduce the multifaceted subject to a monadic entity: a passenger, a user, a customer. As Cantor shows, these non-places aren't sites of communalism and daily life but tourist sites devoid of life, spaces of

solitary contractuality. Rem Koolhaas calls these "post-existential" dead zones "junkspaces," the quintessence of a "regime of engineered disorientation." Whereas non-places, as mere spaces of accommodation, are void of particularity and history, the alternative models of "ArTchitecture"—that is, (global) city planning in service of the art of living—that Cantor takes a stand for (or, should I say, dreams of?) are relational, interactive, collective. The very basis of Cantor's artistic practice (which is still in its early stages) is to inject these alternative models into whatever city he happens to be living in or visiting—and into the contemporary art world itself.

For example, in his second project for "*Traversées/Crossings*," titled *Anxious Utility Vehicles*, 2001, Cantor plastered images of Eastern European automobiles—all shrouded by homemade car covers—on billboards throughout Paris. Cleverly playing on the formal vocabulary of advertising, these eye-catching images of cars under wraps (are they part of a campaign for road safety? or a tease for some new model soon to be unveiled?) take the very engine of urban acceleration out of circulation.

Working in a variety of media, Cantor is always looking for—and his interventions often trigger—new

collaborations, not just with other artists but with practitioners of such diverse disciplines as philosophy, natural science, sociology, and music. This is best reflected in his cofounding of *Version*, a collectively fashioned, transdisciplinary, and transgenerational journal of culture. In *Version* no less than in his various investigations of and interventions in cities, Cantor maps out relationships among heterogeneous elements and practices, individuals, ways of life, cultural products in motion—traveling, mixing, colliding, struggling for expression. □

Swiss-born, Paris-based curator HANS-ULRICH OBRIST heads the Programme Migrateurs at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, where he is currently co-organizing an exhibition titled "Urgent Painting." Over the past decade, Obrist has had a hand in such shows as "Cities on



the Move," 1997–99, which traveled to venues in France, England, Finland, and Thailand after debuting at the Vienna Secession; "Le Jardin, la ville, la mémoire," 1998–2000, at Villa Medici, Rome; and "Media City Seoul," 2000, in South Korea. Obrist is currently collaborating with Molly Nesbit on a book about utopia.