

CHANTAL PONTBRIAND

BIO

Chantal Pontbriand, art critic and historian, as well as curator, is the founding-editor of *Parachute* magazine. After studies in art history, comparative literature and arts administration at the Université du Québec à Montréal and the Université de Montréal, she attended Louis Marin's and Jean-François Lyotard's seminars in Montreal, which had a profound impact on her. She began her life as a critic and curator while still a student. After contributing to various Canadian and foreign journals and magazines, including *Artscanada*, *Vie des Arts* and *Flashart*, she founded the contemporary art magazine *Parachute* in 1975.

Under her leadership, 125 issues were published. *Parachute* has contributed to the renewal of art criticism, based on the transformations witnessed in the seventies with the advent of performance, installation, new media, and new theoretical underpinnings. The bilingual magazine became an indispensable reference source for Canadian and international contemporary art, confirming its extensive reputation on the international scene. (Cf. www.parachute.ca). In 2000, Pontbriand reinvented the concept of the magazine in format and content, focusing on seminal issues in contemporary art. The principle of four issues per year was maintained, but each issue focused thereupon on a single topic or concept that identified and explored major issues and specificities of our contemporaneity. Once a year, an issue was devoted to a "city of emergence", a city that has particularly encouraged the development of innovative art practices due to its particular socio-economical context and challenges, hence a laboratory for the living. The issues since 2000 have titles such as *The Idea of Community*, *Economies*, *Electrosounds*, *Image Shifts*, *Democracy*, *Resistance*, *Digital Screens*, *Design*, *X-Human: Cognitive Sciences/Artificial Intelligence*, *Borders*, *Work*, *Violence*, *Mexico*, *Beirut*, *Shanghai*, *São Paulo*, *La Habana*. *Parachute* suspended publication in 2007, in the wake of new developments.

Since 1970, Chantal Pontbriand has organized numerous contemporary art events in Montreal and in other cities, twenty-five exhibitions and fifteen international festivals. As an independent producer, as a member-director of the Véhicule Art Gallery (1973-75), and as Director of Public Programs at The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (1976-79), she organized exhibitions by Canadian and foreign artists, lectures on contemporary art, and series featuring video, film music, dance and performance artists (including Montreal premieres by Philip Glass, Steve Reich, Terry Riley, Trisha Brown, and the first video exhibitions and performance festivals in a museum in Montréal). In 1977 she co-produced *03 23 03*, Montréal's first international contemporary art event. In 1980, she organized *Performance*, an international multi-disciplinary event focused on postmodernism. Some thirty artists participated, including Richard Foreman, Robert Wilson, Laurie Anderson, Stuart Brisley, Daniel Buren, Dan Graham and Michael Asher, all of who were making their Canadian debuts. The event included an international conference on performance and the postmodern with the participation of both European and American theorists (Thierry de Duve, Jean-François Lyotard, Guy Scarpetta, Douglas Crimp, Hal Foster, Craig Owens).

Also in 1980, Chantal Pontbriand was one of four curators invited by the National Gallery of Canada to prepare the exhibition *Pluralities* to mark the institution's 100th anniversary. Since then she has curated numerous other exhibitions, including *Henri Pontbriand, Canadian Tenor* at the London Regional Art Gallery (1984) and *The Historical Ruse: Art in Montreal* at the Power Plant in Toronto (1988). In 1990, she was appointed Canadian Commissioner for the Venice Biennial, where she presented the work of Geneviève Cadieux. From 1991 to 1993, she restructured the renowned Canadian dance company La La La Human Steps. In 2000, she was adviser and jury member for the Millenium Prize, an international exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada. In 2009, she curated the exhibition *HF|RG [Harun Farocki|Rodney Graham]* at the Jeu de Paume in Paris. Amongst other projects in 2010, she curated *Higher Powers Command* (after Sigmar Polke, 1968), for the Lhoist Collection in Belgium, and *The Yvonne Rainer Project* for the BFI Gallery in London. In Athens the same year, she curated *Courage!!!*, a seminar with Costas Douzinas, Sarat Maharaj, Markus Steinweg and Jalal Toufic. She was dramaturg for choreographer Richard Siegal's new work : *©oPirates*, which premiered as the

opening event of Tanz/Dance in Munich in October 2010. She recently curated the first *Mutations* Platform for Paris Photo 2011, a four-day event of discussions and performances, plus a book on the same subject, published with Steidl, *Mutations, Perspectives on Photography* (60 authors, 416 pages each, French and English versions). After being President of the Jury for the graduates of 2011, in 2012, she is curating *Géographies nomades*, an exhibition/live event with 26 of these young artists at the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts de Paris. She will be curating a series of events at The Palais de Tokyo in Paris in 2012-13, *The Agora, Museum of the XXIst C*, with artists working on knowledge production and systems, theoreticians working on the space of democracy, with talks, lectures and performances, followed by an exhibition.

Defining herself mainly as a Live curator even at the start of her career, Chantal Pontbriand was the co-founder of the Festival international de nouvelle danse in 1982, and acted as its President Director until its closure in 2003. During this tenure, she oversaw the strategic planning of the organization, articulated the main axis for its artistic development and supervised the different components in the organization (administration, communications, production). She programmed and hosted major contemporary dance companies worldwide as well as emerging artists and coordinated special components featuring the following countries: France (1987), Japan (1989), Belgium (1991), Canada (1992), Great Britain (1993), The Netherlands (1995), Spain and Portugal (1997), and, in 1999, a special thematic approach with Africa, obtaining the collaboration of the governments in question and establishing partnerships with local and international institutions. One of the FIND's goals was to lend new dance legitimacy as an artistic discipline and to consolidate its status in the eyes of a broader audience. The "cartography" of contemporary dance in the world it defined over the years aimed at identifying new regions where contemporary dance was making a mark by virtue of its intensity and creativity.

In 2001, the organization went through a major change with the tenth festival called *le grand labo: corps, son, image*, emphasizing artistic process over the show or the spectacle per se and linking dance with developments in image and sound. The idea of dance as a living laboratory, which grew on the organization in the nineties especially, was pursued in the 2003 festival. Henceforth the event's programming paid greater attention to new dynamics between performers and the audience. In addition, the aspect of dance related to the history of performance was highlighted more than ever, relating dance back to the visual arts, and enhancing its interactions with other disciplines. This direction intensified the artistic line of the festival present from the beginning, that of being strongly linked to the visual arts and oriented towards performance and the multidisciplinary. While with FIND, she programmed artists such as Merce Cunningham, Pina Bausch, Trisha Brown, Rosas, Jean-Claude Gallotta, Karas, Kazuo Ohno, Frankfurt Ballet (William Forsythe), DV8 (Lloyd Newson), Xavier Le Roy, Jérôme Bel, Boris Charmatz, Tino Seghal, Vera Mantero, Angels Margarit, Douglas Gordon, Carlos Amorales, Mathew Barney and Sharon Lockhardt.

Throughout the eleven festivals and several seasonal presentations, 600 shows and events from 20 countries were presented, along with exhibitions, film and video programs, symposiums, lectures, and discussion laboratories. Chantal Pontbriand also put an emphasis on the recognition and dissemination of contemporary Quebec and Canadian dance and of upcoming figures from other parts of the world on the international scene, by initiating the Professional Encounters of the FIND, hosting more than 1000 festival and theatre directors from 25 countries between 1985 and 2003. The *Festival international de nouvelle danse* received the Grand Prize of the Arts Council of Montreal in 1995. Ever since its foundation, the Festival gained an international reputation for the quality of its programming and for its determination in making Montréal an international dance capital.

Chantal Pontbriand has also initiated a number of conferences and discussion laboratories in Montreal and in various cities around the world on contemporary art and the issues facing it today, such as the impact of new technologies, globalization and the shifting status of museums. "Parazones", often organised in conjunction with an issue of *Parachute* devoted to an emerging city, were held in Mexico City, Beirut, São Paulo, Shanghai and Havana.

Parallel to these activities, Chantal Pontbriand has published over 200 essays on a regular basis for magazines and catalogues in different countries. Recent writings have examined the work of Rabih Mroué, Carsten Höller, Jana Sterbak, Rikrit Tiravanija, Douglas Gordon, Philippe Parreno, Johan Creten, Sigalit Landau, Yael Bartana, and Yvonne Rainer.

In 1981, she edited *Performance: Text(e)s & Documents*, one of the first publications on postmodern work containing the proceedings of the conference and a detailed compilation of events held during *Performance*.

Her book *Fragments critiques*, published in 1998 by Éditions Jacqueline Chambon in France, is a selection of her essays from 1978 to 1998. Another anthology of her texts, *Communauté et Gestes*, was published by Parachute in 2000. In the year 2001, she also edited the proceedings from the international conference she organized at the FIND in 1999, *Dance: its distinct language and cultural hybridity*. In 2003, the proceedings from the Art and Psychoanalysis conference she co-organized with Hervé Bouchereau, *Sur ma manière de travailler*, were published (PARACHUTE, 2002). An anthology of texts selected from PARACHUTE, are appearing in different languages. *PARACHUTE : Essais choisis (1975-2000)*, was published in French, by La Lettre volée, in Brussels, 2004. Starting in 2012, *PARACHUTE: the first twenty-five years* will come out in four volumes with JRP/Ringier. In 2011, she published a collective book of essays, *Mutations, Perspectives on Contemporary Art*, with Steidl/Paris Photo. She is preparing an anthology of her own texts from 2000 to 2010, *Contemporaneity, Art and the Common*, to be published in English (Sternberg Press, 2012). Flammarion will be publishing her monography *Jeff Wall, les Non-lieux revisités*. She is currently preparing an anthology in the Series Documents of Contemporary Art, MIT/Whitechapel, on *The Global*, and *Harun Farocki, Serious Games*, collected essays for Questions théoriques.

Her writing examines the issues of contemporaneity seen through innovative practices in performance, video, photography and in situ or multimedia installations. Alongside the work carried out by *Parachute*, she has focused her attention on the development of theoretical approaches contemporaneous with and derived from art works themselves. Her most recent writing addresses the issue of subjectivity and the question of the common through the discursive forms that these issues take in contemporary artistic practices.

Chantal Pontbriand regularly gives lectures and workshops in museums and universities in Canada and internationally. She is invited to sit on international juries, such as FidMarseille, Festival of Documentary Film, the Millennium Prize in Canada, the Dakar Biennale de l'art africain contemporain, Dance Screen Video Competition, the Festival international du film sur l'art, and has regularly sat on juries for the Chalmers Prizes, the Canada Council for the Arts and the Quebec governments. As a guest lecturer, she taught seminars on performance, installation and video from 1977 to 1980 at Concordia University, Université du Québec à Montréal and the Banff School of the Arts. She occasionally directs seminars in European universities now that she is in Europe.

She has been a member of various committees and boards of directors, in addition to those of the FIND and *Parachute*, including the Metropolis Bleu festival, the Leonard and Bina Ellen Art Gallery at Concordia University, the Acquisitions Committee of the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal and, in 2002-03, the Steering Committee on the Cultural Policy of the City of Montreal.

Currently, she is a member of the AICA (International Association of Art Critics) and sits on the board of directors of the IKT (International Association of Curators of Contemporary Art). In 2008, she organized and hosted in Montreal and Quebec City the IKT's annual congress, which was held outside Europe for the first time. She is also on the Executive Council of the Global Board of Contemporary Art Awards (Brussels), the Advisory Committee of the International Prize for Contemporary Art of the Prince Pierre Foundation of Monaco, the Advisory Council of the SAM Art Projects Foundation (Paris), and President of Rosascape,

plateforme de création et de production (Paris).

In addition to the material preserved at the Archives de la critique d'art in Rennes, France, her personal archives and those of the Festival international de nouvelle danse - FIND (1982-2004) and of *PARACHUTE* (1975-2007) are held at the Archives nationales du Québec in Montreal.

Along with the Grand Prix awarded by the city of Montreal to the FIND in 1995, Chantal Pontbriand has on several occasions received grants from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec for her work as a critic and curator.

Chantal Pontbriand is familiar with the international scene and networks in the field of visual arts as well as dance. Since 1970, she has unceasingly spent several months a year traveling in North America, Latin and South America, Europe, the Middle-East, Africa, and Asia, doing research and developing partnerships with foreign governments and institutions.

From 2005 onwards, she lived in Paris, and is now in London. She keeps a base in Montreal. After having held the position of Head of Exhibition Research and Development at Tate Modern, she is developing new exhibition and publication projects, and is working with foundations as an arts consultant internationally. She is currently a consultant to the Luma Foundation and its President Maja Hoffmann. In 2012, in order to regroup and structure her different activities, she has founded PONTBRIAND W.O.R.K.S. (for We_Others and myself_Research_Knowledge_Systems).

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