

ART PAPERS

PHANTASMAGORIA: SPECTERS OF ABSENCE CHARLOTTE, NC

Curated by José Roca and co-organized by Independent Curators International (ICI) and the Museo de Arte del Banco de la República, Bogotá, Colombia, the traveling exhibition *Phantasmagoria: Specters of Absence* explores the manifestation of these impulses in contemporary art through the work of twelve artists, including Christian Boltanski, Michel Delacroix, Jeppe Hein, William Kentridge, and Rosângela Rennó [McColl Center for Visual Art; February 8—April 26, 2008]. The projects on view share themes and strategies that echo their archaic, early phantasmagoria counterparts—the image or literal use of breath or vapor, the presence or concept of shadows as ghostly entities, the use of mirrors and projections, and interactivity, which casts the viewer variously as reanimator, vampire or ghost. Ultimately, *Phantasmagoria: Specters of Absence* sets in motion a mode of inquiry that is pertinent to visual art in general. As Christian Boltanski has pointed out, the formal properties of the museum and the mausoleum are identical. As such, the placement of artwork in a museum has everything to do with death.

New media artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer created the installation *Sustained Coincidence [Subsculpture 8]*, 2007, specifically for this exhibition. Incandescent light bulbs are hung along the back wall of a room. A computerized surveillance system organizes and overtakes the expected shadow-producing process, and the viewer's shadow is thrown across the room in counter-intuitive and astonishing ways. Here, lights flicker, one's shadow projects diagonally across the space, replicates, and reinstates itself somewhere else. The effect is akin to time travel, or rather, to the amplification and reification of oneself—now here, now there, and simultaneously in both places at once. One blinks, shifts or moves across the room and the mystery redoubles—a strobe-like effect but more complex, communicating an otherworldly system of logic and physical law.