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” ’Event-ing’ Jacques Tati in Paris ”

Stéphanie-Emmanuelle Louis

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“EVENT-ING” Tati in Paris.

Stéphanie-Emmanuelle LOUIS.

Colloque international: *Framing Film : Cinema and Visual Arts*, Winchester University (UK),
septembre 2009.

You may know the French director Jacques Tati and you might have heard about the cultural event dedicated to him which took place from April to August in Paris. It was called “Tati trip in Paris”. Today I’ll try to explain how the “Tati trip in Paris” created a frame which improved the understanding of Jacques Tati’s. I’ll qualify this cultural process as an “EVENT-ION”. The following talk puts in evidence its three phases of elaboration.

- In the first place: how a cinematic experience is designed as an event.
- In the second place: how a film museum context possibly enriches a basic cinematic experience.
- In the third place: how a complex exhibitory system makes the event a reality written both in time and in space.

Evention process « Tati Trip in Paris »

- 1: Designing a cinematic experience as an event.
- 2: La Cinémathèque Française, a film museum context for the event.
- 3: From Bercy to Paris: giving a territory to the event.



So, I’ll present the particular case of *Eventing Tati in Paris*.

I. Designing a cinematic experience as an event.

a - Restoring the roots of the event.

“Tati trip in Paris” coincided with the release of *M. Hulot’s holidays* in a restored version. This restoration is an opportunity for the audience to rediscover this black-and-white talking film with all its grey shades and its rich soundtrack. Work on colour contrasts and sounds are both typical aspects of Jacques Tati’s features.

The restoration was undertaken by Jacques Tati’s last legal successors: Jérôme Deschamps, his grand-nephew, and Macha Makeieff. In 2000 Jérôme Deschamps founded with Jacques Tati’s daughter, Sophie Tatischeff, a society and foundation called: *Les Films de mon Oncle*. It is still in charge of managing Jacques Tati’s inheritance. Its aim is to reassert the value of what is a common cultural heritage as well. Sophie Tatischeff died just before the first restoration program ended in 2002. It concerned to *Play Time*, Jacques Tati’s master piece which has been misjudged until then, especially in France.

2002: *Playtime* restored version

Jérôme Deschamps:

« We try to organize the reunion between Jacques Tati and the audience ».

in *Le Figaro*, 10/06/2002



The Films de mon Oncle’s crew sees each restoration as a new occasion to celebrate Jacques Tati. Each release is well-orchestrated with official and public screenings, specially created set designs and theatrical shows and happenings. I shall notice that Jérôme Deschamps and Macha Makeieff run a well-known theater company. As they were creating

what would become a very popular show called the Deschiens, Jacques Tati had been a careful and precious adviser. In the 1930's, before becoming a master of comic films, Jacques Tati had actually tested out his first mimes on a music-hall stage. Afterwards he remained attached to the world of entertainment and was always very concerned with the issue of transmission to next generations. Tati's last film, *Parade*, perfectly exemplifies this.

In fact Jérôme Deschamps and Macha Makeieff are not only Jacques Tati's legal successors but his continuators too. This dual role appears like a strong ideological basis of Deschamps and Makeieff's work to promote Jacques Tati's heritage. We'll see how it influenced the design of "Tati trip in Paris".

b- A temporal development of the event.

A temporal development of the event

- **03/07/2009: national release** of Mister Hulot's Holidays restored version
 - **06/2009: previews** at La Cinémathèque Française and La Rochelle Festival.
 - **05/2009: preview** at Cannes festival
- 04/2009: Jacques Tati retrospective** at La Cinémathèque Française



As a result of a long restoration process, the 2009 release of *M. Hulot's holidays* is at first a cinematic event. But in fact its connection with temporality seems more complex due to a lasting development of the event. In France the national release occurred on the 3rd of July, but previews took place at la Cinémathèque française, and in festivals such as Cannes and La Rochelle. Moreover the release was preceded by Jacques Tati's films retrospectives, particularly in Paris.

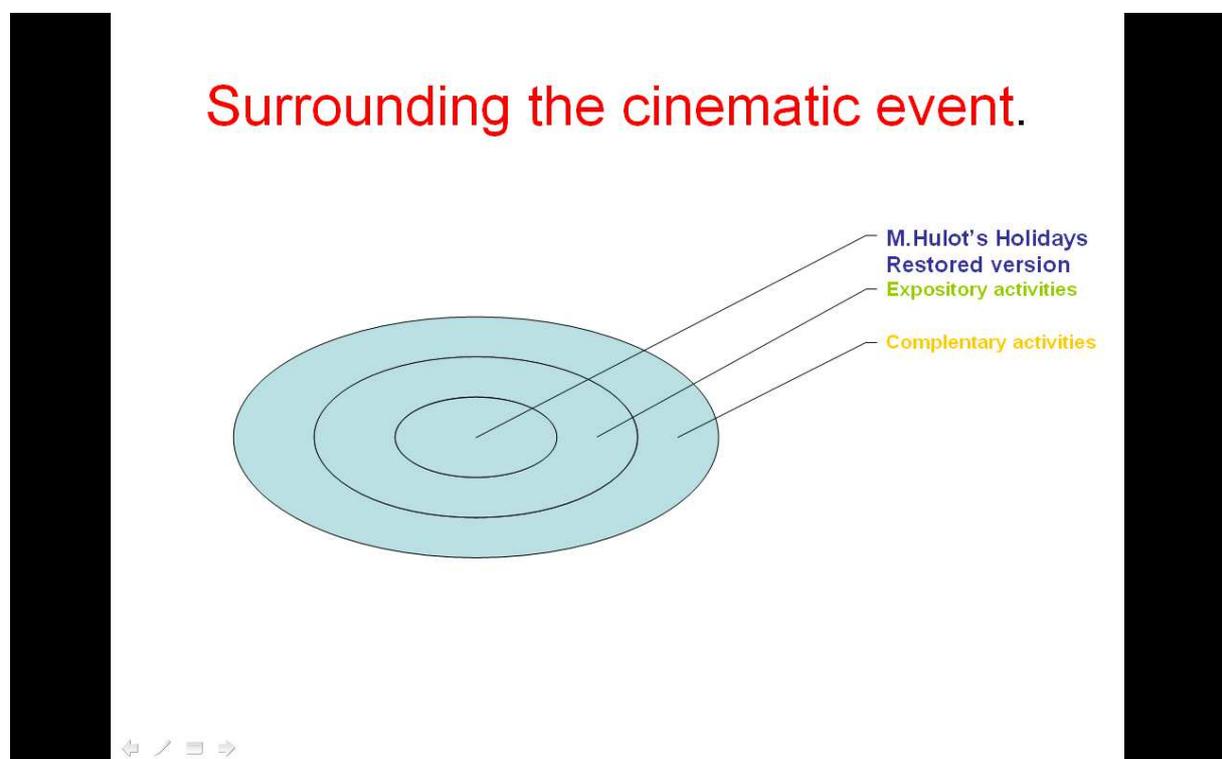
One of them took place at la Cinémathèque française, as one of its usual activities. La Cinémathèque française is certainly the most famous film museum in France. Since the first years of its existence, it has been combining screenings with presentations of film-related materials. This has also been the case for Jacques Tati's retrospective this year. At la Cinémathèque française, the rediscovery of *M. Hulot's holidays* was actually designed in a protean way, as we'll see now.

II. La Cinémathèque Française, a film museum context for the event.

Two main kinds of activities surrounded this rediscovery at la Cinémathèque française: expository activities and complementary activities.

The Museum's expository activities are based on film and non-film materials. They include: Jacques Tati's retrospective, parallel thematic programmes and an exhibition about Jacques Tati's films.

The Museum's complementary activities are more or less related to a proper cinematic experience. They firstly consisted in oral manifestations, publications and museum tours and then in shows.



a- The museum's expository activities.

In the first place, I'll explain how the museum expository activities worked together.

* The retrospective of Jacques Tati's features and short films, gathered 13 titles in 16 versions. This retrospective allows both to wait for and to contextualize *M. Hulot's holidays*. This close environment induces to compare Jacques Tati's films with each other, according to an author orientated method.

Expository activities Jacques Tati Retrospective

13 TITLES



Short films with or by Jacques Tati

- 1934: *On demande une brute.*
- 1935: *Gai Dimanche .*
- 1935: *Cette nuit-là.*
- 1936: *Soigne ton gauche.*
- 1947: *L'Ecole des facteurs.*
- 1967: *Cours du soir.*



16 VERSIONS

Long films by Jacques Tati

- 1947: *Jour de fête*; 3 versions.
- 1953: *Les vacances de M. Hulot.*
- 1958: *Mon Oncle*; 2 versions.
- 1967: *Play Time.*
- 1971: *Trafic.*
- 1973: *Parade.*
- 1978: *Forza Bastia*; edited by Sophie Tatischeff

35 SCREENINGS



Expository activities Thematic programmes

« Around Jacques
Tati »

- 79 long and short films
- Fiction
- from 1924 to 2008
- 6 pedagogical films

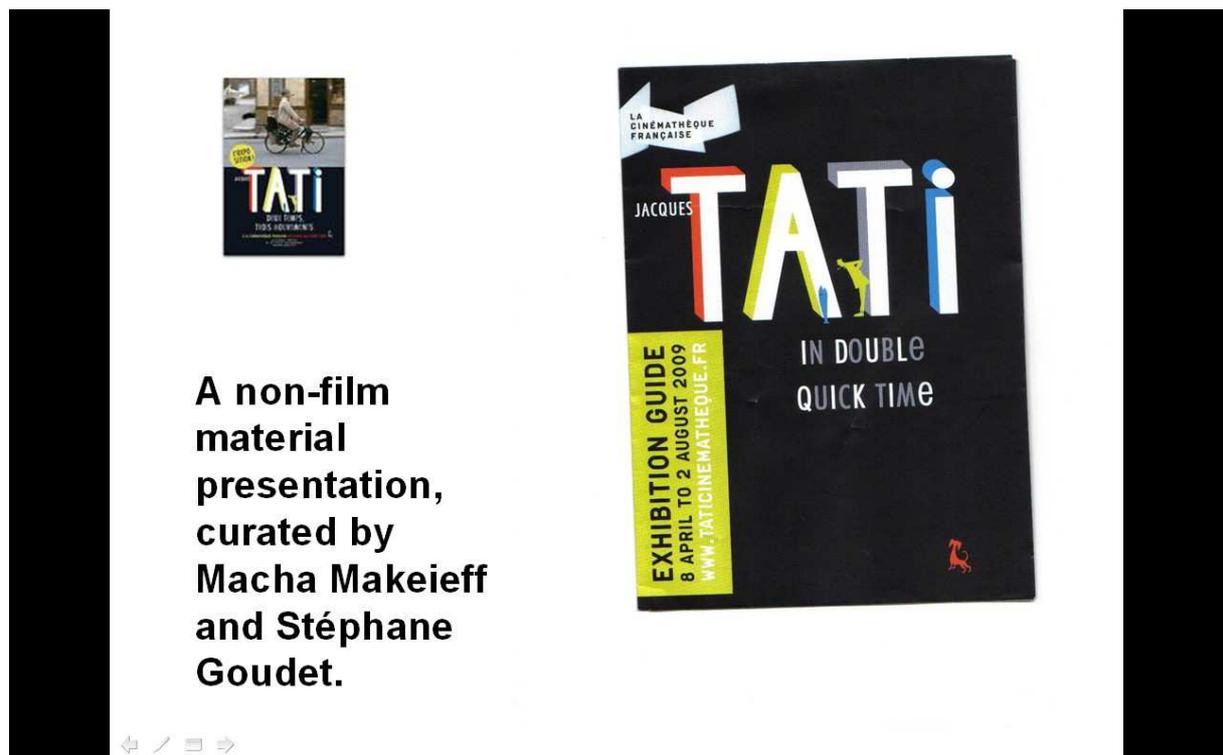
« Modern Life »

- Designed for children
- 25 long and short fiction
- By Jacques Tati or other directors
- Fiction, documentary, animation



* In the meantime, a thematic programming called “Autour de Tati” helps to put his films back in a broader cinematic context. In overall, such programming favours comparison between films. It induces therefore viewers to an historian practice of film art. This particular approach is specific to museums.

* A feature distinguishes film museums from the other visual art museums: they exhibit both film and non-film materials. It would actually seem quite incongruous, even today, to exhibit Monet’s palette just beside his paintings. Film museums invite exactly to such a comparison by proposing these film and non-film exhibitions.



At la Cinémathèque française Jacques Tati’s retrospective worked together with another presentation called: “Jacques Tati in double quick time”. The 650m² of the temporary exhibition hall have been besieged by Macha Makeieff, who is a set designer, and another curator, Stéphane Goudet, a French academic.

They clearly opted for an edutainment exhibition, which is quite unusual within the French art museums context. This playful point of view can be felt throughout the whole experience. In an immersive scenography archives and original accessories sit next to contemporary art pieces. Film abstracts and illustrated labels further document these heterogeneous exhibits. Moreover a range of monitors broadcast pedagogical analysis of Tati’s films. They have been shot in an old-fashioned manner that caricatures 1950’s tv programs. Visitors watch them while sitting in an enormous green seat inspired by Tati’s film,

My Uncle. Everywhere visitors are invited to experience and become a part of this scenery. They are actors in the expository process.



Ms Arpel's sofa

has been recreated by

DOMEAU & PERES



Visitors experienced it in the exhibition.



**Archives,
art
pieces,**



accessories, in a playful



**and
immersive
scenography.**



b- The museum's complementary activities.

I'll now briefly talk about the museum's complementary activities.

* Another way to carry on further the primary cinematic experience is offered through oral manifestations, tours of the exhibition and publications. Lectures, presentations, and

workshops took place regularly during the retrospective, including some for children. A very rich and inventive catalogue has been published. Tours of the exhibition were also offered, mainly for children. Some of these tours were also conceived like happenings and performed by actors of Jérôme Deschamps and Macha Makeieff's company.

* This leads me to talk about performances that form the last category of activities composing this eventful Tati season. La Cinémathèque française housed the reading of an unmade scenario, a concert of Jacques Tati's films soundtracks and a theatre play for children.

In Tati's case, la Cinémathèque française well exemplifies the various possibilities of framing a cinematic experience within a film museum context. So far it seems important to remember the two leading themes of the event that are: artistic heritage and kinship, and interdisciplinary opening. They really give the tone of the whole event.

In a museum's context interdisciplinarity can be materialized in two different ways. On the one hand: by exhibiting and staging other arts and artforms within its own space, as we just saw. On the other hand: by externalizing the museum's particular questioning to other places. We'll see now how Jacques Tati's film experience has been exported from a proper cinematic place to other places of interpretation.

III. From Bercy to Paris...

The two preceding perspectives suppose contradictory movements. The one is centripetal and attracts every available resource to the museum while the other is centrifugal and projects one museum issue in other contexts. Both movements address the issue of museum boundaries and therefore of the museum experience territory. In this case, the museum experience is cinematic as well.

Tati's case makes clear that these movements are not necessarily exclusive. In fact their complementarity leads to increase complexity in designing a cultural event. However it also appears as a risk to dissolve the event in a cultural mess.

a- The expository system.

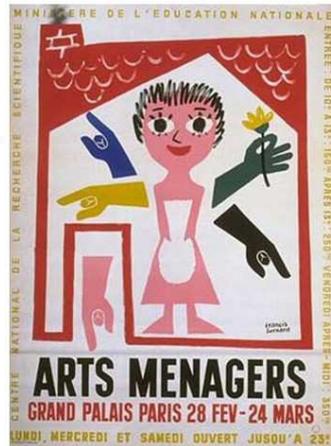
La *Cinémathèque française* was the epicentre of "Tati trip in Paris". Its building housed a tripartite exhibition system based on museum collections. At the same time heritage oriented tours and talks were provided by other museums in Paris, notably the *Musée des Arts décoratifs* and the *Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine*.

* The *Arts décoratifs* museum consists of design and advertisement collections. It firstly proposed a roundtable which purpose was to question Tati's connection with design: how was he inspired by new objects surrounding him in the 1950's? How did he put them into comical situations? In which way his films are representative of French 1950's design? What is the difference between designing film set accessories and objects from daily life?

A walk through the museum collections was also proposed. Some advertising posters had been selected and could be consulted on computers in the museum gallery. After having commented on them, the guide led the group through the 1950's collections of furniture and objects.

Musée des arts décoratifs: Jacques Tati and design.

French poster of the late 1950's, representing the perfect wife: the powerful goddess of the house.



Arpel's sofa inspired by Charlotte Perriand

* A tour of the *Cité de l'architecture et du patrimoine* was also proposed. Its contemporary gallery presents building models and old films related to French architecture in the twentieth century.

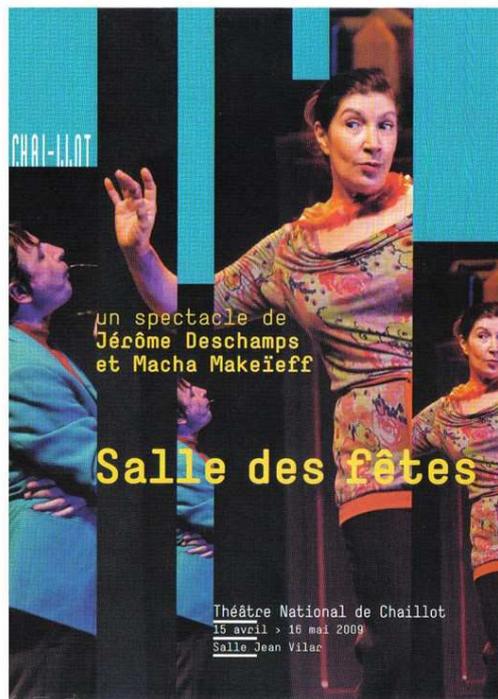
Besides, the famous Arpel house was reconstituted at scale 1 at the *104*, which is a recent cultural venue in Paris. This free presentation was successful.

As a conclusion to this point, I'd like to insist on the common ideological background kept by all these associated activities. They clearly tend to deepen Jacques Tati's films understanding. However the other motto of the event was transmission to next generations. It was achieved through a theatrical show staged at the *Théâtre de Chaillot* by Jérôme Deschamps and Macha Makeieff's company [*Salle des fêtes*].

Complementary activities



My Uncle:
recreated set
design.

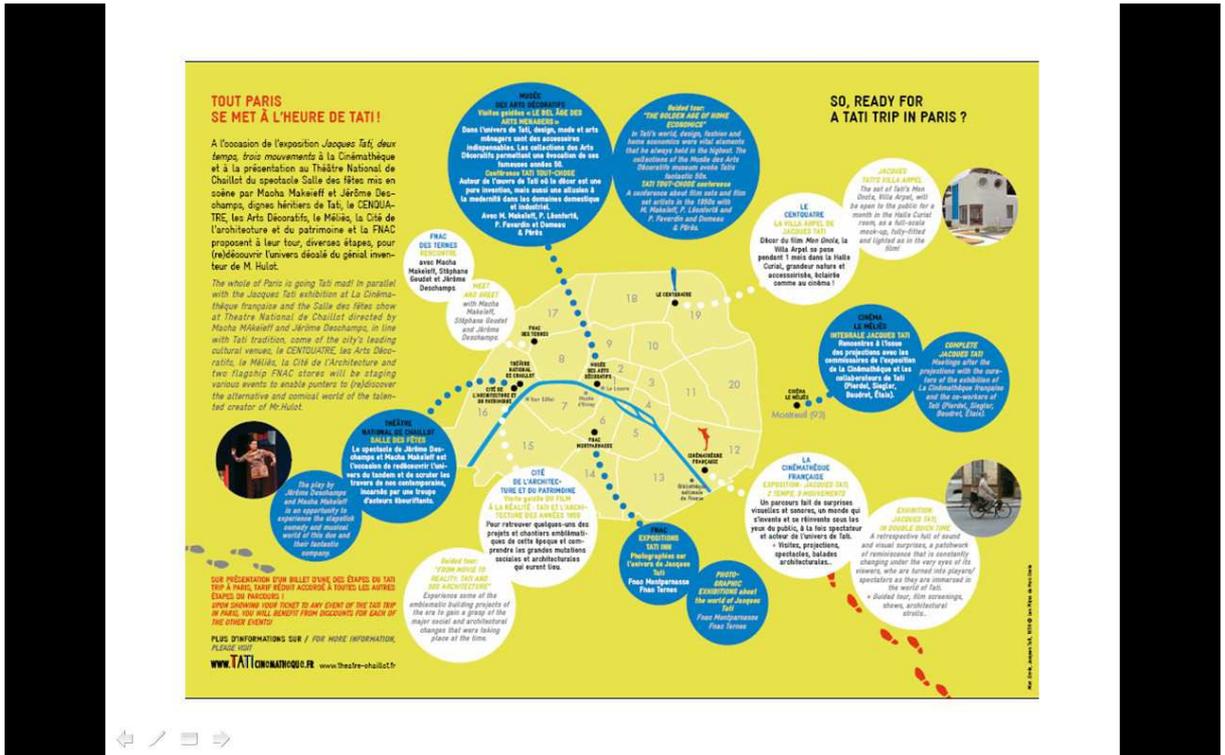


The theatrical show pursues Jacques Tati's meticulous observation of daily life, but reframes it with a flamboyant-burlesque mise en scène.



All these cultural manifestations form a very articulated system around Jacques Tati's films. To qualify this system, I would propose the adjective: "expository". I would define it as a group of cultural manifestations tending to explain or comment on a common issue.

Moreover it's important to notice that in Tati's case the spread of the museum issue coincides with a territorialization of a cultural experience. From the epicentre located in Bercy Jacques Tati's event ends up besieging the whole capital city.



b- The exhibitory system.



We've seen before that the Tati event was designed in time and space. But an event is a media construction as well. In other words: carrying out successfully the design of a cultural event requires its promotion thanks to advertisement. Tati's case shows the expository system is included in a broader exhibitory system, which aims at manifesting the existence of

the “Tati trip in Paris”. The goal is to maintain the audience’s attention throughout the four months the film and non-film exhibitions will be lasting.

The advertisement display is threefold: a traditional campaign, a series of commercial exhibitions and signalling.

1) Firstly, to design the event, organizers took advantage of Bercy location which by chance refers to Jacques Tati’s images. Signs pointing to the Cinémathèque française were placed in Bercy neighbourhood, especially on the way from the tube to la Cinémathèque française.

2) Commercial exhibitions took place in some Fnac shops for a short duration. These shops sell the catalogue and tickets for the Cinémathèque française’s exhibitions, for the theatrical show. They displayed a digital installation around the Cinémathèque française’s exhibitions and a more traditional presentation on the catalogue.

3) Traditional advertising campaign was important as well, through cultural magazines, web sites or short films screened in cinemas. But the giant posters stuck in the tube contributed more than expected to create the buzz around the exhibitions. The public transport company actually required Mister Hulot’s pipe to be replaced by a winch in order to respect the Evin law banning smoking and tobacco commercials displaying in public spaces. This censorship provoked a burlesque fuss that made the cultural event more visible.



As for the expository system, we note that the exhibitory system has spread in different spaces in Paris. As I previously said the exhibitory system encompasses the expository one by advertising the whole cultural manifestation. But the expository system

takes an active part in promotion as well, by sending visitors from one cultural venue to another. As Ms. Arpel would say: “Everything communicates!”... and contributes to create the event.

To sum up on the M. Hulot’s holidays 2009 release, I’ll say the evention process did not only frame this film but Jacques Tati’s whole work in different times and places. It’s important to notice the various dimension of this frame, which is simultaneously temporal, physical and intellectual. Finally, I would say that one may wonder if, in this particular case, the framing process could also be assimilated as an “opening” Jacques Tati’s work. That is a paradoxical but exciting perspective.