



NUIT IMMERSIVE SUPER TOMORROW

INTERVIEW WITH ÉLISABETH RIVIÈRE, DAVID COMBE AND ANNE BOUVIER

Tracks is celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary this year. **Élisabeth Rivière**, executive producer, and **David Combe**, co-managing editor, can you tell us about the story of this programme available on Arte?

Élisabeth Rivière: *Tracks* was the result of a call for proposal issued by Arte in 1997, won by production company Program33, headed by Fabrice Coat. The French-German network wanted to create an original music programme. The programme originally lasted 26 minutes, but evolved as it opened to cinema, visual arts, performance art, and activism, at the same time as a digital version appeared. *Tracks* is a programme made up only of images commented in voice-over by Christelle André, who's been with the programme since its inception.

What is the mindset behind the show?

David Combe: First and foremost: curiosity. Add to that this very stimulating obsession: to always step out of our comfort zone. *Tracks* is a unique programme: we're lucky to have Arte's trust, which allows us to highlight little-known or unknown artists, authors of surprising things that the general public doesn't know about. We approach them like children would, to discover them and share their creations with our audience, without any preconceived notions.

Anne Bouvier, you're an actor and director. You're also president of the Adami, which is partnering with *Tracks* for this Nuit immersive. Can you tell us about the Adami?

Anne Bouvier: The Adami is an organisation which handles artists' rights. When an artist's work is broadcast, it generates royalties, which we redistribute. 25% of those royalties are used to fund creation, be it cinema, theatre, or arts and techniques. We financially support artistic projects and accompany artists' careers. We're an OGC, an Organisme de gestion collective (Organisation for Collective Governance), which aims to support artists from all disciplines—from the circus performer to the actor, from the singer to the stuntperson. We're like a multidisciplinary world. The Adami is administered by and for artists and, like *Tracks*, we want to remain at the forefront of innovation in the arts. We help artists working on hybrid creation—which is sometimes no more than simple research. Although the management of royalties means that we look at the past, we're also looking to the future thanks to this kind of collaboration.

A Nuit immersive in the église des Célestins: it's a first for the Festival d'Avignon. Can you tell us about how it came about?

D.C.: The Adami takes part in the programming of the Nuit immersive, and we sponsor artists as well. This process allows for the creation of a "Tracksian" world, with the pleasure of being able to show how we're dealing with a type of performing arts which doesn't obey the usual rules. It's a sort of happy mixture: the artists presented by *Tracks* come from very different worlds. For this Nuit immersive, we made an even more conscious effort to programme together diverse disciplines, with artists from many different countries. And we're giving the spectators the opportunity to interact with the artists in a different way, to attend a show in a different mindset.

A.B.: Although our organisation might be seen as very different from *Tracks*, we share their desire to support artists working in the field of hybrid creation. We're above all interested in an art that's alive. Hybrid culture, whatever its nature, is always organic. The performance also blurs the line between performer and work. The performer becomes the creator of their performance. You'll find that link in the approach to performance *Tracks* supports. New questions have arisen regarding artists: What's the place of the performer when it comes to digital creation? Isn't

the performer a mediator between the work and the audience? This concept of performer is what brings together all the acts selected for this Nuit immersive.

D.C.: We share with the Adami and the Festival d'Avignon this European vision of "emerging" artists; it's part of our missions. Much like the Adami, we want to support some of them. We're here to help them make their voices heard. We also chose together the artists who will present their creations in the *église des Célestins*, which is not a theatre. It's a constraint that isn't constraining at all; we're more than happy to work with it. With the Adami, we think that this Nuit immersive shouldn't be a patchwork of artists, but that it must focus first and foremost on creation. The idea is to have a subtle mix, like a DJ set, to be in the idea of performance.

Experimentation and trials are at the heart of those artists' work. The idea of performance seems more than ever essential...

D.C.: We're dealing with *performers*; we could also use the word *makers*—a very popular word in the United States, which expresses a way of wrestling back control from technology. Those *performers* are very open people, but they want to master technology: they're not afraid to put their hand in it, to plug and unplug cables, to reinvent things, to create their own machines. Technology can dispossess the artist from their own work, but they reject that idea. I also like to use the word *fluidperformers*: those artists work within porous disciplines; they work with dance as much as with new technologies, as much with scenography as visual art. Our programme isn't entirely dedicated to digital culture. Those artists are like *Tracks*: that's how they thrive, they don't like cliques.

"Super Tomorrow" is the theme of this Nuit immersive...

D.C.: "Super Tomorrow" isn't a phrase that can be easily translated into French. One could speak of an "amplified tomorrow" as a response to a harrowing vision of the present, to think of tomorrow under unprecedented angles. Which is what many artists working in speculative design, bio-art, or contemporary art are doing, and which requires them to question the codes of the performing arts. Our goal is to allow them to share their already very personal approach of that theme. The other challenge is to bring them together, to "fit" their performances together, to provide a sort of panorama of that theme by artists who use very different forms and technologies. The Adami and *Tracks* work on the same territories, meet the same people, but they do so as an institution while we're a TV programme. We share the desire to work towards multidisciplinary and not to divide culture into parts, with a European programme that strikes a balance in terms of genres and artistic disciplines. The audience will be able to wander from one performance to another. Different experiences with no predictable narrative... It's a fantasy straight out of Woody Allen's *The Purple Rose of Cairo*: the actor steps out of the screen to meet the spectator. It takes on a fascinating shape in the *église des Célestins*.

***Tracks* started with a French-German focus, which has since expanded to Europe and the whole world...**

É.R.: *Tracks* is a journey in all senses of the word. Technically, artistically, emotionally. Culture as presented by *Tracks* has evolved a lot over the years, the cultural fields we explore have changed. I've been with the programme since its creation and every once in a while I realise how much larger in scope, how much better, it has become. In terms of organisation, *Tracks* is a team of about ten people. Four for the digital edition, two editors-in-chief, three for the editorial team, and two for the production team. A lot of the work is done collectively. What makes *Tracks* unique is that we decided right away to eschew a critical relationship to culture to approach it like journalists. We always rejected the idea of aligning with the "tastes" of a host—not that there's one to begin with!

D.C.: We like first and foremost to look for the pioneers, for those artists and activists who open doors and explore new fields. They can be seen as clumsy, or can be hard to take seriously. But we see in them courage, energy, and enthusiasm. What will they become? We don't know if their experiments and creations will play an important part in the history of art. But what matters most is their openness.

Interview conducted by Marc Blanchet