Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster's film reveals a landscape recovering from an even larger cataclysm - she depicts the desert where the first atom bomb was detonated in 1954. Hugh's Black Party (2002), an interview with the founders of hip-hop, is concerned, like his earlier films, with the encroachment on personal memory of an over-mediated 'legend'. These short works achieve a similar end to the 90-minute long Shimshant, expressing the complexities of making a portrait of a place or a history. Memories, collective or personal, are remembered largely through representations - these attempts to get back to a root of reality,  as lived, and, unlike Godard, without the quotation marks.

COIN PERRY

NEW YORK: PACE WILDENSTEIN

MICHAL ROVNER: IN STONE
30 April - 16 July
www.pacewildenstein.com

In Stone is an exhibition of Michal Rovner's latest video objects and installations. Open books or stone tablets have been placed in more than 20 vitrines, with lines of moving people, similar to those in Rovner's videos since 1999, projected downwards onto the objects. Rovner's video installation, The Well (2004), consists of a darkened room in which a shallow stone well is cut into the floor, where a video of swarming people seem to fill the negative space. A second video installation, Tablets (2003), consists of two massive rectangular stones, lying flat on the floor, upon which rows of projected human silhouettes crawl. It simultaneously evokes both the Ten Commandments and televised footage of soldiers in formation.

Rovner is an Israeli who moved to New York City in 1987 and her imagery is permeated with connotations of both war and the Middle East. She has shown photographs since the '90s, video since '96, in both theatre and multipanel installations, and throughout the '90s technology-richly distorted images of desert environments and human beings. These are her first video objects, and they show her to be engaging with an object developed more in Europe than in the United States: namely, the book or library as memorial object, a scriptural form that has been successfully used on a massive scale for almost two decades. What puts Rovner in the same league as such artists as Anselm Kiefer and Rachel Whiteread, who have also used this form, is that Rovner adopts the form of the literary memorial while significantly transforming it. In contrast to book memorials created by both Kiefer and Whiteread, Rovner's video objects evoke life not death. By substituting lines of people, moving synchronously, for lines of text, Rovner's books and tablets suggest interconnections between language, the body and vision.

The blurry, abstract figures that make up Rovner's lines of text interact in various ways. Sometimes they seem to move in or clasp in harmony. At other times, their movements seem more individualistic and even in conflict with one another. Time is also transformed. Sometimes the figures interact so slowly that they appear like written or printed letters. Elsewhere they seem to swarm or

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Raven's books and tablets present the technologically mediated body as a link between language and vision. This is one of their great contributions. At the same time, they also contain a potential danger, which stems from Raven's strategy of mass ornament, as the social representation of human beings. Already, by the late 1920s, mass ornament was recognized as a type of visual spectacle accessible through photography, film and stadium events, and in the '30s and '40s it became one of the favourite visual means used by fascist and totalitarian states to build and perpetuate an image of national unity. In light of this, it will be interesting to see how Raven develops her handling of the crowd. So far, she has handled it superbly, but mass ornament tends towards ever greater and greater spectacles, and it tends to crowd out heterogeneity. As Raven becomes more successful, it will be interesting to see if she can avoid allowing her crowds to become too gigantic and authoritarian and her spectacle too overwhelming.

MATTHEW BIRD

PARIS: POMPIDOU CENTRE
GIUSEPPE PENONE
21 April - 23 August
www.artsdepompidou.fr

This retrospective of one of the leading exponents of Arte Povera features more than 80 works - installation, photography and sculpture - which constitute a highly personal lifetime's integration of man's relationship with nature.

Penone draws on a variety of animate and inanimate natural forms, including trees, rocks and leaves, laboriously exploring their surfaces and deriving deep within them to expose an absolute core and reinvest inert matter with life. His practice embodies the relationship between the 'real' time of growth and the temporal time of sculpting, his sculptures inside out at the apex of their meeting. Penone painstakingly replicates natural patterns of growth and decay such as the erosion marks on a rock. He also explores the surfaces of the human body, drawing parallels between different modes of transformation in man-made and animate forms. He makes imprints from his own body, such as fingerprints, which become 'maps' that he then magnifies and transfers onto canvases or natural surfaces (such as the bark of a tree or the skin of a potter). Thus, Penone places himself as an interlocutor, a receptor through whom nature can express even the most imperceptible manifestations.

Much of the work is inspired by Ovid's Metamorphoses: trees seem to assume human form, or betray human emotion; the rock also features prominently. As the frozen state of a historical organism it encapsulates the memory of becoming that Penone's work seeks to captivate and present to the world.

The exhibition includes part of the important series Alberi (Trees) (started 1968), which consists of several variations of a beam of wood that has been carved into to the trunk and branches of the sapling have been exposed. Through his restroking of the eroding phenomenon of growth he leaves the bark with these fragile yet beautiful patterns of nature's passage, long after the mature tree has been felled, these 'spirits' of the tree remain spiritually present.

Also on show is Restaurare l'Ombra (To Restore the Shadow) (11999), which comprises 488 wire mesh boxes filled with leaves covering all four walls of a room, from floor to ceiling, and immense prints made from thousands of acacia themes.

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