



**PRESS COVERAGE**

# **Jessica Mitrani & Rossy de Palma: *Traveling Lady***



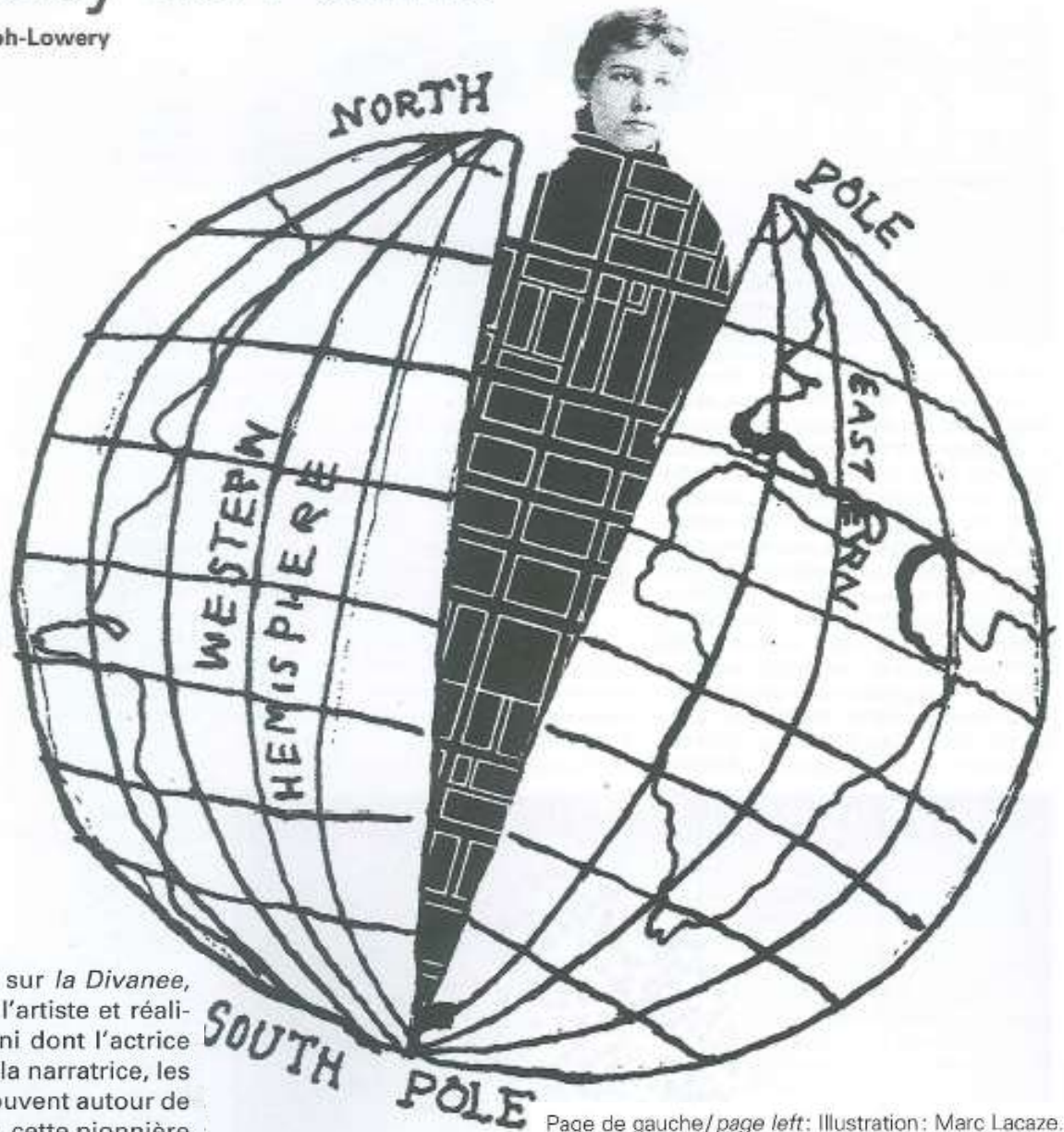
**Friday, October 10–Saturday, October 11, 2014  
FIAF Florence Gould Hall  
55 East 59<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY, 10022**

October 2014

# TRAVELING LADY

## Jessica Mitrani et Rossy de Palma

Frédérique Joseph-Lowery



Ayant déjà collaboré sur *la Divanee*, un court-métrage de l'artiste et réalisatrice Jessica Mitrani dont l'actrice Rossy de Palma était la narratrice, les deux femmes se retrouvent autour de la figure de Nellie Bly, cette pionnière du journalisme d'investigation qui, notamment pour braver le sexisme de son époque, fit le tour du monde en 72 jours.

Page de gauche / page left: Illustration: Marc Lacaze.  
Collage: Brian Close, Jessica Mitrani. « Split Traveling Lady ». 2014. Illustration et collage. 20 x 20 cm.  
Ci-contre / right: Brian Close, Jessica Mitrani. « Rossy de Palma Silhouette ». Collage. 20 x 20 cm.





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■ En 1889, Nellie Bly, pionnière américaine du journalisme d'investigation (elle s'était fait passer pour folle afin d'enquêter dans l'asile de l'île de Blackwell [1]) décida de faire le tour du monde en moins de 80 jours. Le patron de son journal lui répondit : « C'est impossible. Vous êtes une femme : vous auriez besoin d'un protecteur. Et même si c'était possible, vous auriez tellement de bagages que vous ne pourriez pas flaire vos changements rapidement. En plus, vous ne parlez que l'anglais. N'en parlons plus. Il n'y a qu'un homme qui puisse faire cela. » Nellie Bly, de son vrai nom Elizabeth Cochrane, tint tête à son patron, remporta le défi lancé au héros de Jules Verne et s'offrit même le luxe d'un petit détour chez l'écrivain français. Elle fit le tour du monde en 72 jours, trouva des hommes pour l'« escorter » quand il le fallait et, comme ses rares escales étaient pour la plupart des ports de l'empire colonial britannique, elle n'eut aucun mal à se faire comprendre.

Jessica Mitrani a choisi de centrer son spectacle, *Traveling Lady*, autour de cette voyageuse, autour surtout de cette idée de « bagage encombrant » (au sens de « passé encombrant » en anglais : « *To have some heavy baggage* ») que constitue l'image traditionnelle de la femme, sédentaire par définition. Bly l'intéresse car elle mit à mal cette image avec des moyens de femmes : en se faisant confectionner un manteau et une robe suffisamment solides pour résister aux 72 jours de sa traversée (2). Elle ne porta rien d'autre durant tout son périple. Dans son sac de voyage de taille très modeste (plus petit que ce qu'il est aujourd'hui permis de prendre avec soi dans l'avion), l'objet le plus gros était une crème de beauté. Nous voilà avertis. Dans ce voyage, il s'agira de « revisiter » l'identité féminine, en toute légèreté.

## VOYAGE AUTOUR DE LA MODE

La *Traveling Lady* est une sorte de représentante de commerce qui promeut une ligne de produits indispensables à qui mène une « quête ». Une quête de quoi ? Mitrani n'y répond pas. Au spectateur de décider. Elle se charge, elle, de la rédaction d'un « Manuel » où les produits consignés s'animent sur des écrans avec lesquels l'héroïne principale, incarnant des doubles de Bly, interagit. Dans ce voyage à la destination inconnue – spirituel, imaginaire, philosophique ? – sont énoncées quelques règles de l'existence : « Les règles pour parcourir le monde sont les mêmes que pour voyager dans sa maison ou autour de soi. » Cette logique – tourner en

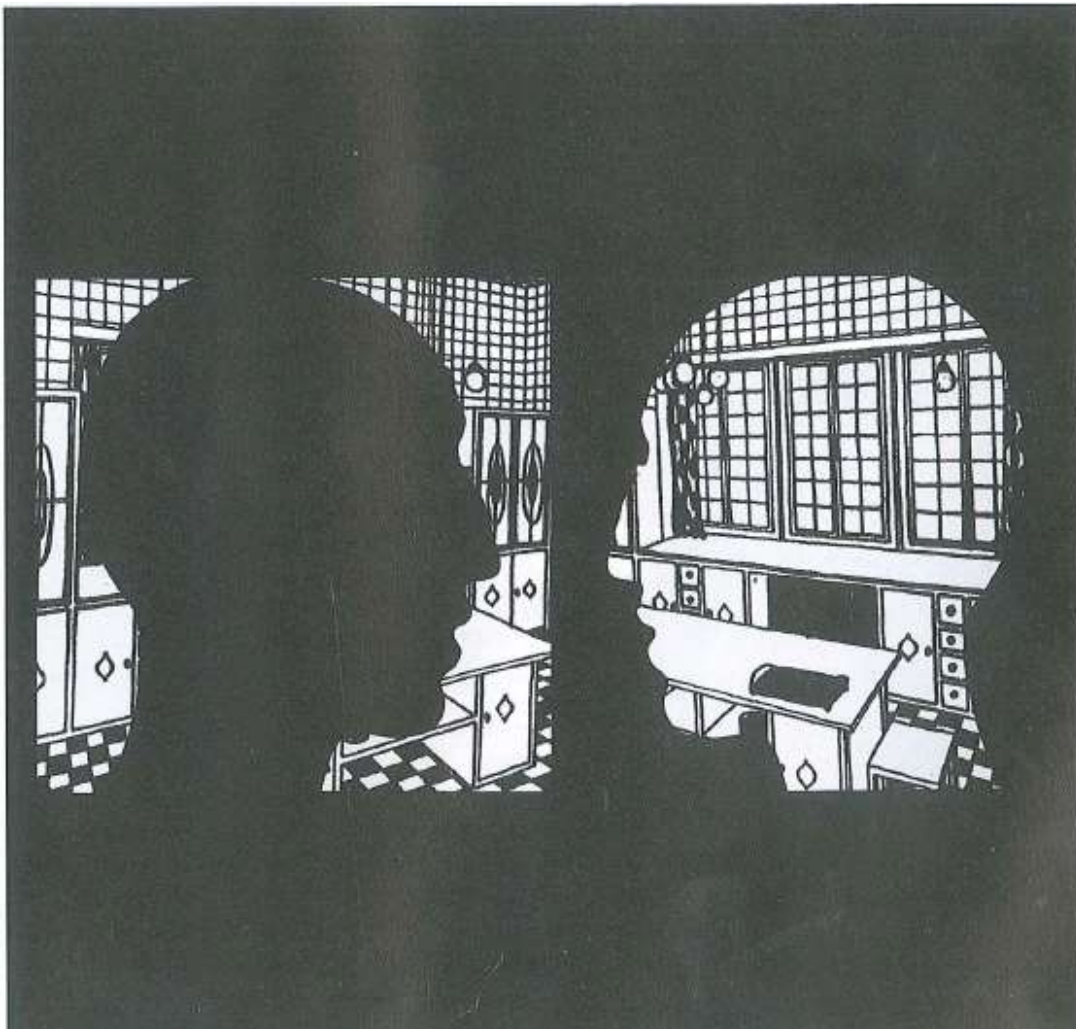
rond – engendre un effet de tournoiement qui propulse une série d'images en noir et blanc sur des écrans multiples ou sur la mousseline blanche du fantôme de Nellie Bly – une marionnette de 2 m 40 de haut que manipule un danseur. On voit, sur plusieurs supports, la permutation infinie de divers motifs abstraits ou de fragments de cartes projetées sur une même image photographique immuable et statique de la silhouette de Nellie Bly. Mitrani crée son cinéma comme on joue avec une figure en papier découpé (*paper doll*). Comme dans ses autres courts-métrages où l'héroïne avait les deux pieds chaussés dans une seule chaussure, le flux cinématique n'est pas le fait du déplacement physique de son héroïne. Il résulte du montage cinématographique et de la manipulation des images, dans des effets souvent kaléidoscopiques qui évoquent l'art optique. Comme ces images se déroulent de-



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vant nos yeux au son des injonctions « Laissez-vous porter par le flot, ne craignez pas le mouvement, ne sous-estimez jamais le pouvoir de rester immobile », on peut supposer que c'est à nous que s'adresse le « Manuel », sorte de guide du spectateur idéal. À l'image des premiers dessins animés musicaux de Walt Disney – les *Silly Symphonies* de 1933 – le monde inanimé s'anime et prend la parole. En résumé : « Rosy de

Palma joue la Traveling Lady. Elle voyage dans sa maison, dans son quartier, dans un livre, et devient pour un temps une marque (elle fait la promotion d'un manuel, de la crème de beauté, de la pilule parfaite – qui donne lieu à un opéra. » Les autres objets sont un « thermomètre du désespoir » ou l'instrument de « pleurage et scintillement », Wow & Flutter. L'artiste détourne l'appareil qui mesure les déformations d'un son en-





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Jessica Mitrani. « La Divanee » avec Rossy de Palma.  
2014. Vidéo, 14mn.

"La Divanee" with Rossy de Palma.

registré pour calibrer les pleurages (*flutter*) et *wahou* de son personnage. Pas de voyage (*motion*) sans *e-motion*, c'est un des maîtres mots du livre *Atlas of Emotion* de Giuliana Bruno (3), dans lequel Jessica Mitrani a découvert son aventurière. Caméléonesque, la *Traveling Lady* entre dans le cœur de son amant, dans une plante, et s'arrête au terme du spectacle dans un masque africain qui est « l'image négative de ses états intérieurs ». Le *fors* intérieur a pour dehors toutes ces formes et objets et pour *forum* le milieu de la mode.

#### ROSSY DE PALMA AU MIROIR

L'actrice sur scène est Rossy de Palma. Avec elle, Mitrani parcourt l'histoire de la mode. Ce n'est plus, comme dans la série *A Single Shoe* (4), les atours du pied féminin qui font l'objet de films et de performances, mais la taille féminine plus ou moins prise selon que l'ère où l'on est transporté au gré des trois manteaux est victorienne (ligne corsetée), contemporaine (moins près du corps) ou futuriste (manteau phosphorescent à capuche protectrice « comme le toit d'une maison »). L'actrice aux longs cheveux noirs, dont le visage singulier marqua quatre films de Pedro Almodóvar (5), est l'ambassadrice de ces produits ; un peu comme dans la réalité. Cette femme doit à son physique, célébré dans la presse espagnole comme un Picasso vivant, l'intérêt que lui portent les couturiers. Elle a défilé pour la collection automne-hiver *le Cirque* de Thierry Mugler (1995-1996), ainsi que pour Jean Paul Gaultier. Elle est également liée à une ligne de sous-vêtements qu'elle a créée avec Andres Sarda. Un parfum de la maison État Libre d'Orange porte son nom. Et c'est en qualité d'icône de la mode qu'elle traverse *Prêt-à-porter* (1994), le film satirique de Robert Altman.



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La présence et la personnalité créatrice très forte de Rossy de Palma ravivent le pâle fantôme de Bly, journaliste oubliée. Un peu comme les lèvres de l'actrice Mae West au verbe si dévergondé inspirèrent à Salvador Dalí la création d'un divan-lèvres, tandis que la réplique du buste généreux de l'actrice se transformait en flacon de parfum de la maison Schiaparelli.

*Traveling Lady* est le « Voyage autour de ma chambre » non pas d'un homme (Xavier de Maistre), mais d'une femme à son miroir. Le parcours rappelle l'un des derniers courts-métrages de Mitrani, *la Divanee*, une comtesse portugaise qui, dès l'âge de 18 ans, décida de ne plus passer sa vie que dans son lit. Elle fit ainsi le tour des pièces de sa maison jusqu'à ce qu'on la ramenât à son point de départ. Elle dit alors, et c'est Rossy de Palma, la narratrice au profil dédoublé en miroir qui s'en fait le porte-parole : « Que j'aie les yeux ouverts ou fermés, cela ne fait aucune différence. » Comme c'est la dernière phrase que prononce cette belle endormie traversant l'histoire de l'art (6) de toutes les belles allongées dans leurs fatras de plis académiques, et comme le double profil de Rossy de Palma à la beauté atypique est celui qui lui révélera sa beauté (je serai ton miroir, lui dit-elle en reprenant un air jadis chanté par Nico du temps du Velvet Underground warholien), il est permis de douter que la prise de conscience spéculaire de sa beauté par « la belle » sera un succès ; à moins que la beauté ne soit en définitive que poudre de néant ou ne relève pas du visible. À moins aussi, comme le fait remarquer Giuliana Bruno, théoricienne féministe du cinéma, que l'on considère le miroir comme

ce « un lieu autre », « hétérotopique », explique Michel Foucault : il nous projette où nous ne sommes pas, dans une image virtuelle de nous-mêmes qui, aussi loin de nous soit-elle, ne nous ramène pas moins à nous-mêmes (7). Le miroir est alors un voyage où la saisie de soi est moins visuelle qu'haptique. C'est le déplacement que nous effectuons « entre nous » qui constitue le transport narcissique, non ce qu'on voit dans une psyché. ■

*Frédérique Joseph-Lowery est critique d'art. Elle est notamment l'auteur de plusieurs livres sur Salvador Dalí.*





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### **Jessica Mitrani**

Née en Colombie en 1968

Vit et travaille à New York

Expositions récentes (sélection):

2012 *Do Your Thing*, White Columns Gallery, New York; *Second Skin*, VPL, New York

2013 *Single Shoe Solo Show*, Hat on Hook Gallery, Disjekta contemporary art center, Portland

2014 *Straitjacket*, *Curly Hair*, Lust Gallery, Vienne

Projections récentes (sélection)

2012 *Headpieces For Peace*, vidéo, ASVOFF festival, Centre George Pompidou, Paris, France;

*Gesamt*, vidéo, Copenhagen Art Festival

2013 *Six Stories in a Single Shoe*,

Time Based Art Festival, Portland

2014 *La Divanee*, The Americas film festival, New York

Performance récente:

2010 *Figurehead*, White Slab Palace, New York

### **Rossy de Palma**

Née en Espagne en 1964

Vit et travaille en France

Filmographie récente:

2013 *Tres bodas de más*, de Javier Ruiz Caldera; *No sé si cortarme las venas O dejármelas largas* de Manolo Caro; *The Boy with the Cuckoo-Clock Heart* de Stéphane Berla et Mathias Malzieu; *&ME* de Norbert ter Hall

2014 *La que se avecina* de Laura Caballero (série télévisée); *La Divanee* de Jessica Mitrani; *Amor de mis amores* de Manolo Caro

2015 *Anacleto: Agente secreto* de Javier Ruiz Caldera

(1) Nellies Bly, *Ten Days in a Mad-House*, 1887.

(2) Le premier chapitre de son livre *Around the World in Seventy-Two Days* (1890) est entièrement consacré à cette question.

(3) Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film*, Verso, 2002.

(4) *A Single Shoe* rassemble cinq films (donc cinq types de chaussure), une performance et des photographies présentées dans plusieurs expositions de 2008 à 2013. La première chaussure où chausser deux pieds à la fois fut réalisée pour le spectacle *Some Historic, Some Hysteria* qu'elle créa, en 2006, avec Ildiko Nemeth et le New Stage Theater de New York.

(5) *La Loi du désir*, *Kika*, *Femmes au bord de la crise de nerfs* et *la Fleur de mon secret*.

(6) La référence donnée au générique est *History of the Nude* de Noel Grossman.

(7) C'est dans le chapitre de présentation de Nellie Bly que Giuliana Bruno évoque la conférence donnée par Michel Foucault en 1967, « Des espace autres », publiée en 1984 dans la revue *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité*. Elle introduit la figure d'une autre aventurière: Esther Lyons. Cette première exploratrice « des glaces du Canada » plaça en frontispice de son récit de voyage une image d'elle-même en train de se maquiller « devant sa glace. »

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Jessica Mitrani. « In A Single Shoe ». 2004-2006.

Tirage numérique couleur. 60 x 40 cm

Crédit: Max Steven Grossman et l'artiste.

Color digital print.

## Traveling Lady Jessica Mitrani and Rossy de Palma

Having already collaborated on *Divanee*, a short film by the artist and director Jessica Mitrani with Rossy de Palma as narrator, the two women are back together in a project about Nellie Bly, a pioneer of investigative journalism who defied the sexism of her day by traveling round the world in 72 days.

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In 1889, Nellie Bly, a path-breaking American investigative journalist famous for passing herself off as a mental patient order to get inside an insane asylum on Blackwell Island,<sup>(1)</sup> decided to go around the world in less than 80 days. "It's impossible for you to do it," was the terrible verdict. "In the first place you are a woman and would need a protector, and even if were possible for you to travel alone you would carry so much baggage that it would detain you in making rapid changes. Besides you speak nothing but English, so there is no use talking about it; no one but a man can do this." Bly, whose real name was Elizabeth Cochrane, stood up to her boss, beat the challenge faced by Jules Verne's character and even allowed herself the luxury of a detour to chat with the French writer. She went around the world in 72 days, found men to "escort" her when needed, and, since most of her stopovers were in ports controlled by the British empire, had no problem at all in making herself understood.

Jessica Mitrani decided to focus her performance/film *Traveling Lady* on Bly, a woman with "some heavy baggage" in both senses of the phrase, both associated with the traditional image of women, sedentary by definition. What interested Mitrani was the way Bly subverted this image with the women's apparatuses available to her: she had herself made a dress and coat that were sturdy enough to hold up during the whole long journey.<sup>(2)</sup> That's all she wore the whole trip. The biggest object in her very modest handbag (smaller than an airplane carry-on today) was a jar of cold cream. So the audience has been forewarned: this show is going to take a rather light touch as it revisits the female condition.

#### TRIP AROUND THE WORLD

*Traveling Lady* is like a traveling saleswoman selling a line of products indispensable for anyone undertaking a "quest." A quest for what? Mitrani doesn't say. It's up to the audience to decide. Her job was to write a "manual" where the products she sells are represented by animations on the screens with which Bly, played by several doubles, interacts. A few rules for living are laid out in this journey (spiritual? imaginary? philosophical?) to an unknown destination: "The rules for traveling the world are the same rules as for traveling your home and the same rules for traveling around yourself." This logic of spinning around produces a whirling effect that propels a series of black and white images on multiple screens and the white muslin worn by Bly's ghost, a six foot five puppet manipulated by a dancer. On these diverse media we see an infinite permutation of different abstract motifs and fragments of maps projected onto a single, immutable and unmoving photo of Bly in silhouette. Mitrani makes movies as if she were playing with a paper doll. Like in her film shorts where the protagonist has both feet stuck into one shoe, the kinetic flow does not come from the physical movement of the star, but from the editing of the film and the manipulation of the images, often with Op Art-like kaleidoscopic effects. As these images unfold before our eyes, with a voice-over telling us, "Go with the flow, do not fear movement, never underestimate the power of remaining still," we can imagine that this manual is meant for us, as a sort of guide for the ideal audience member. Like in Walt Disney's first musical animated cartoons, his 1933 *Silly Symphonies*, the inanimate world begins to move and speak. In



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short, "Rosy de Palma plays the Traveling Lady. She travels in her home, her neighborhood, a book, and for a while becomes a brand (she sells a manual, beauty cream and the perfect pill) that leads to an opera." The other objects are "a thermometer of despair" and an instrument called "Wow & Flutter." The artist appropriates an existing instrument made to measure the distortions of a record sound to calibrate her inner flutters in relation to the vibrating body or situation. No voyage (motion) without e-motion is a core concept in the book by Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion*,<sup>(3)</sup> where Mitrani discovered her adventurer. The chameleon-like Traveling Lady enters her lover's heart and a plant, and ends up, at the end of the piece, in an African mask that is "the negative image of her interiority." Her heart of hearts is shaped on the outside like all these objects and its forum is the world of fashion.

## ROSSY DE PALMA IN THE MIRROR

The actor on stage is Rosy de Palma. Mitrani travels through the history of fashion with her. Unlike her series *A Single Shoe*,<sup>(4)</sup> films and performances focusing on the finery worn on a woman's foot, this piece is about women's waists, depending on the era to which we're transported by three coats, the Victorian (tightly corseted), contemporary (less tight) and future (a phosphorescent coat with a protective hood "like the roof of a house"). A little like in reality, this actor, known for her long black hair and her roles in four films by Pedro Almodóvar,<sup>(5)</sup> is the corporate ambassador for these products, a function she also performs in reality. What fashion designers see in her is the physique that led that led the Spanish media to dub her a Picasso portrait come to life. She was on the catwalk for Thierry







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Mugler's fall-winter collection *Le Cirque* (1995-1996), and modeled for Jean Paul Gaultier as well. She is also associated with a lingerie line she created with Andres Sarda. A perfume by the État Libre d'Orange company bears her name. And it was as a fashion icon that she played in Robert Altman's satiric movie *Prêt-à-porter* (1994). De Palma's powerful presence and creative personality revive the pale ghost of the forgotten newspaperwoman Bly. Likewise the lips of the subversively licentious Mae West inspired Salvador Dalí to design a lips couch, and her bust became a perfume bottle for Schiaparelli.

*Traveling Lady* is the "voyage around my bedroom," not of a man (Xavier de Maistre) but a woman in front of her mirror. We're reminded of Mitrani's recent short film *La Divanee*, where an eighteen-year-old Portuguese countess decides that she will spend the rest of her life reclining in a chaise lounge. She travels through the rooms of her home until she gets back to where she started from. Then she says, through her spokeswoman de Palma, the narrator whose face we also see in the mirror, "It doesn't make any difference whether I keep my eyes open or shut." Since these are the last words spoken by this sleeping beauty who travels through art history,(6) a history of beauties reclining in academically folded stuff, and since it is de Palma's unconventionally beautiful profile that reveals the heroine's beauty ("I will be your mirror," she says, to a tune Nico once sang with Warhol's Velvet Underground),

we have the right to doubt that this beauty's specular awareness of herself as such will lead to anything good, unless that beauty turns out to be simply the powder of nothingness or otherwise invisible. And also unless, as stated by the feminist cinema studies theoretician Giuliana Bruno, we consider the mirror "a site of otherness," what Michel Foucault called "a heterotopia," insofar as it projects us to where we are not, a virtual image of ourselves that no matter how far from us it may be brings us back to ourselves.(7) Thus a mirror is a voyage where our glimpse of ourselves is not so much visual as haptic. It is the voyage "between ourselves" that constitutes the narcissistic transport, not what we see in a mirror. ■

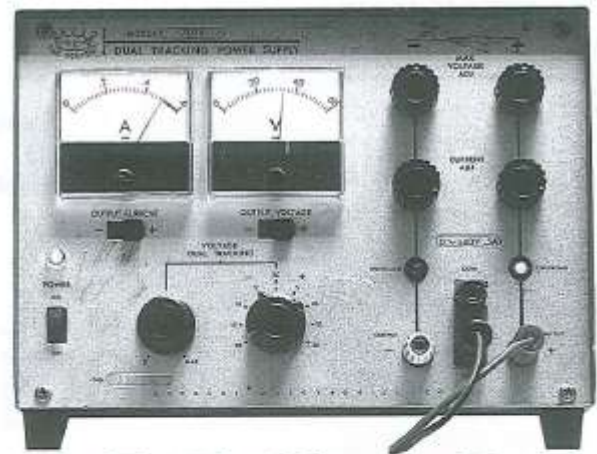
Translation, L-S Torgoff



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- (1) Nellie Bly, *Ten Days in a Mad-House*, 1887.
- (2) The first chapter of her book *Around the World in Seventy-Two Days* (1890) is devoted to that question.
- (3) Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film*, Verso, 2002.
- (4) *A Single Shoe* is a suite of five films (each featuring a different kind of shoe), a performance and photos exhibited several times between 2008 and 2013. Her first shoe for two feet was made for the performance *Some Historic, Some Hysterical* she did in 2006 with Ildiko Nemeth and New York's New Stage Theater.
- (5) *Law of Desire*, *Kikka*, *Women on the Edge of a Nervous Breakdown* and *The Flower of My Secret*.
- (6) The credits reference *History of the Nude* by Noel Grossman.
- (7) In her chapter about Nellie Bly Giuliana Bruno refers to Michel Foucault's 1967 lecture "Des espace autres" published in 1984 in the magazine *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité* (unofficial English translation: available at <http://foucault.info/documents/heterotopia/foucault.heterotopia.en.htm>). She introduces the figure of another adventurer, Esther Lyons, the first explorer of Canada's "frozen wilderness" whose frontispiece for her travel book was a picture of herself applying makeup "in front of her mirror."

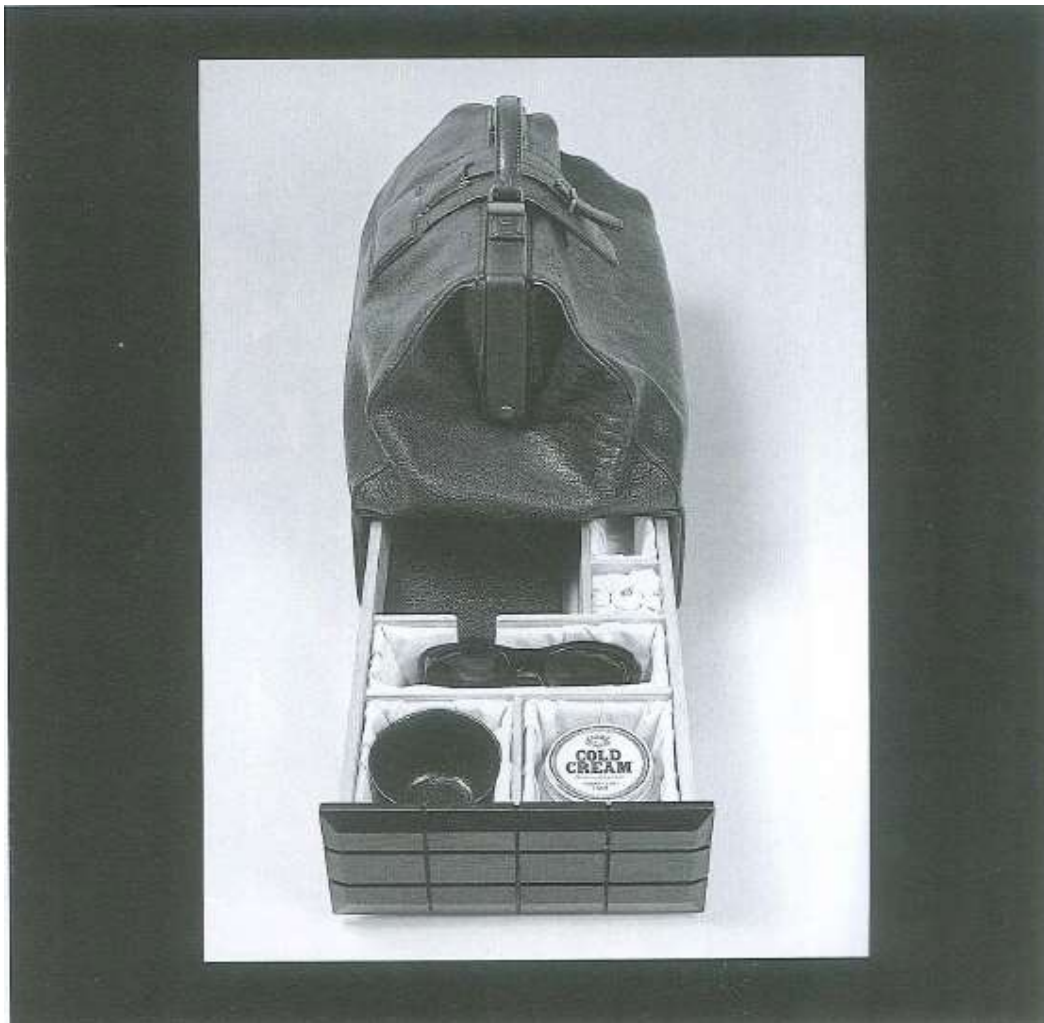
*Frédérique Joseph-Lowery is an art critic who has published several books about Salvador Dalí.*



# WOW FLUTTER METER



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Page de gauche / *page left*: Jessica Mitrani.  
16/72 collages numériques sur papier aquarelle.  
Couleurs et noir et blanc. 23 x 30 cm. *Digital collages on  
watercolor paper.* Ci-contre, de haut en bas / *right*:  
«Wow Flutter Meter». 2014. Matériaux divers.  
27 x 16 cm. «Travelling Lady Bag». 2014. Matériaux  
divers. 43 x 24 cm.



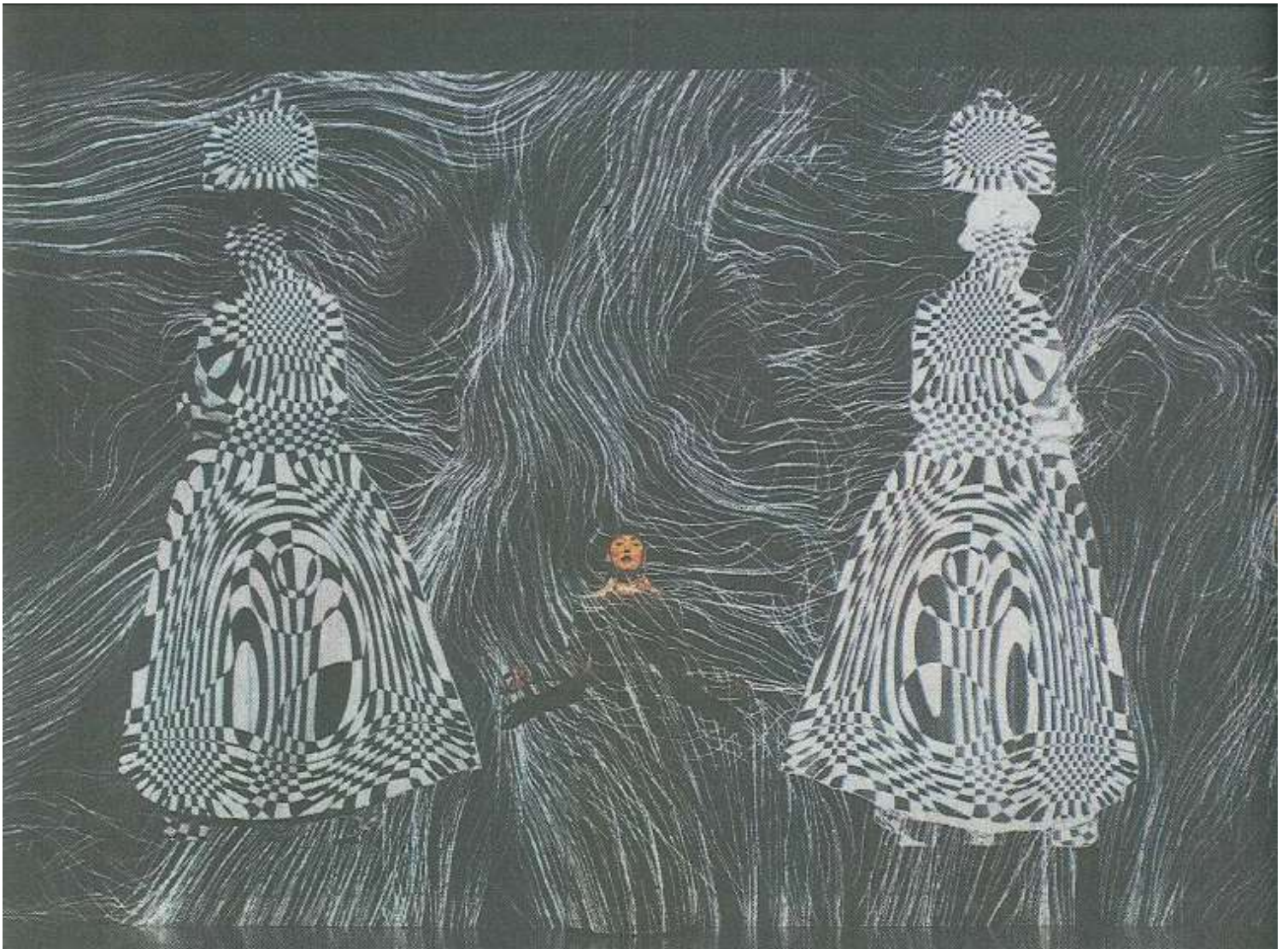
**THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.**

Tuesday, October 14, 2014

# GREATER NEW YORK

## HEARD & SCENE

RAY A. SMITH





Tuesday, October 14, 2014

# One Woman, Several Ladies

At the French Institute Alliance Française on Friday, audience members encountered a headless narrator, a talking jar of cold cream, singing pill dispensers and the Spanish actress Rossy de Palma devouring a miniature twin of herself.

These were among the scenes from the world premiere of "Traveling Lady," Jessica Mitrani's mix of live and multimedia performance. The experimental work intended to conjure the spirit of Nellie Bly, the 19th-century journalist who circled the globe in 72 days with one bag, whose contents included a dressing gown, a flask and the aforementioned cold cream.

The performance, which ran for two nights as part of the alliance's annual festival Crossing the Line, marked the U.S. stage debut for Ms. de Palma, who is known for her angular features and work with outré artists such as the filmmaker Pedro Almodóvar and fashion designer Thierry Mugler. In September, she made a campy appearance on the runway for



Rossy de Palma, above and top, in Jessica Mitrani's "Traveling Lady," a mix of live and multimedia performance.

Jean Paul Gaultier's final ready-to-wear show in Paris, to raucous applause.

In "Traveling Lady," she plays several traveling ladies, including twins in a "five-star sanitarium" in Vienna. The

characters wrestle with sexism, harmful inner voices and the pressure to look young and pretty, while wearing period clothing made by the fashion collective threeASFOUR.

Ms. Mitrani, a Colombian-

born, New York-based visual artist, lightened up the proceedings with surreal doses of humor, even making digs at how pretentious such performance works can be.

"I came all the way to confront my demons, not to see a light show," Ms. de Palma said at one point, as busy lighting effects whirred during a moment when her character was self-actualizing.

With a bouquet in her hand at a reception following the performance, Ms. de Palma said acting in "Traveling Lady" appealed to her because it is about "women's freedom, no boundaries, no fears, express ourselves, no frustration. It's refreshing. And Jessica has an amazing imagination."

For her part, Ms. Mitrani said, "I think humor is the only way for us to look at the craziness of the world."

"It's very important to make fun of oneself and to laugh a little bit about the situation of our society and of the world," she added, "because otherwise, everything would be unbearable."



# The New York Times

Wednesday, June 18, 2014

## THE Arts

### Arts, Briefly

*Compiled by Allan Kozinn*

#### A World Premiere From Patti Smith

“Killer Road,” a work by Patti Smith, her daughter, Jesse Smith, and the Soundwalk Collective, is one of three productions that will have world premieres as part of Crossing the Line, a festival presented by the French Institute Alliance Française. The festival, in its eighth year, opens on Sept. 8 with the premiere of Olivier Saillard’s “Models Never Talk,” in which seven supermodels will, in fact, talk. In “Killer Road,” Ms. Smith and company explore the poetry of Nico, the idiosyncratic singer for the Velvet Underground (Oct. 2). The third premiere, “Traveling Lady,” brings together the visual artist Jessica Mitrani and the Spanish actress Rosy de Palma in a work about Nellie Bly, a 19th-century investigative journalist (Oct. 9, 10).



# M

**M** Le magazine du Monde  
samedi 1<sup>er</sup> novembre 2014



Dans un tourbillon d'images d'archives, de jeux de lumière et de morphing, Rossy de Palma incarne Nellie Bly, Phileas Fogg au féminin qui fit le tour du monde en soixante-douze jours, seule, en 1889.



THÉÂTRE  
**L'égérie  
d'Almodovar  
à Paris.**

PAR **ROSITA BOISSEAU**

Elle est directe, chaleureuse. Rossy de Palma ressemble à la fille que l'on imagine. Entre star et « girl next door », avec cet accent à couper au couteau qui transforme le français en une

langue accidentée. Lorsque, à la fin des années 1980, le cinéaste Pedro Almodovar accroche son nom en haut de l'affiche, Rossy de Palma est chanteuse de pop-rock et gagne sa vie comme serveuse dans un bar. Celle qui a pour « *premières amours la danse classique et la musique* » devient l'une des figures du cinéma espagnol. « *J'ai eu la chance de tout apprendre avec*

*Pedro. Je n'avais pas eu le temps de me former.* » Elle sait maintenant tout faire (ou presque) : elle fabrique des robes, compose des chansons. Et grimpe aussi sur scène pour *Traveling Lady*, mis en scène par Jessica Mitrani, dans un rôle qui semble taillé pour elle. Il s'agit de celui d'une femme peu ordinaire, la journaliste Nellie Bly, qui fit le tour du monde en 1889 avec juste une valise et un pot

de cold cream. « *Elle n'avait pas peur d'aller de l'avant et ne connaissait aucune limite. Et elle ne renonçait pas à sa féminité pour autant.* » Ça tombe bien : Rossy de Palma ne croit pas aux frontières, sauf gastronomiques... mais un coup de fourchette suffit à les effacer. **M**

**TRAVELING LADY DE JESSICA MITRANI.  
AVEC ROSSY DE PALMA. AU THÉÂTRE  
DE LA CITÉ INTERNATIONALE, 17, BD  
JOURDAN, PARIS 14<sup>e</sup>. LES 3 ET 4 NOVEMBRE,  
À 21 H. DE 7 € À 22 €. TÉL. : 01-43-13-50-60.**



Thursday, September 18, 2014

## JESSICA MITRANI ON FEMINISM & IDENTITY

by: KAELIE KELLEHER  
SEPTEMBER 18, 2014

New York based artist Jessica Mitrani utilizes sculpture, film, video and performance art to explore the theme of femininity and its role in each person's identity. Her latest project, the film and performance Traveling Lady, takes inspiration from American journalist Nellie Bly, better known for her 72-day trip around the world with only a suitcase for a companion, to explore the idea of contemporary traveling ladies. Spanish actress (and muse to fashion icons Jean Paul Gaultier and Thierry Mulger) Rosy de Palma is the protagonist of the performance.

The Traveling Lady is a "multimedia adventure that explores and explodes feminine archetypes and stereotypes." This project was made possible thanks to a grant from The Hérmes foundation as part of its "New Settings" program, in support of contemporary creative arts that "involve collaboration and creative dialogue between artists from the performing and visual arts."







**Thursday, September 18, 2014**

The World premiere of the *Traveling lady* will take place on October 10 & 11 at [French Institute Alliance Française \(FIAF\)](#)'s fall festival [Crossing The Line](#), in Manhattan. This year's festival features 15 artists and companies from around the world and "explores the dialogue between artist and public... how artists help re-imagine the world as critical thinkers and catalysts for social evolution". Outside of the U.S., *The Traveling Lady* will be presented at [Theatre de la Cité](#) in Paris, on November 3 & 4.

Mitrani will also be presenting a series of her short films on September 25th, as a part of the exhibition and 13-night performance [FUTURE FEMINISM: 13 Tenets of Future Feminism](#). This event will take place at [The Hole](#) in NYC, from September 11-27 and will feature dozens of artists who will flip your old-fashioned view of feminism upside down and inside out, for a suggested donation of \$10.



*Images from Mitrani's studio in TriBeCa, showing prints and sculptures of Traveling Lady. Image credits: Britt Kubat*



## Rossy de Palma, *Muse to Pedro Almodóvar, Jean Paul Gaultier, and More, Makes Her U.S. Stage Debut*

 [Kristin Tice Studeman](#) | [Fashion](#)



Rossy de Palma in Jessica Mitrani's "Traveling Lady"

*Photo: Jessica Mitrani*

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ossy de Palma is a woman who knows how to woo the fashion set. Though she's probably best known for her work in Pedro Almodóvar's films (she's starred in several of his movies, including *Women on the Verge of a*





*Nervous Breakdown*), the Spanish actress and performance artist has also played muse to the likes of Jean Paul Gaultier, Thierry Mugler, and Christian Louboutin. Most recently, she strutted in Gaultier's final ready-to-wear show, showing off her famous hourglass figure when she stripped down to nothing but a corset. She also performed at Azzedine Alaïa's Parisian [bash](#) for the new Apple Watch, where she danced and crooned for some of fashion's finest.

Tonight in New York, she makes her U.S. stage debut in Jessica Mitani's *Traveling Lady*, a live multimedia performance (co-presented by [the French Institute Alliance Française \[FIAF\]](#) and the Hermès Foundation) inspired by Nellie Bly's 72-day journey around the globe. Just hours before tonight's debut, De Palma waxed on about the costumes Threesfour created for the show, partying with Alaïa, feminism, and more.





# STYLE.COM

Friday, October 10, 2014

**Tonight's show is a live multimedia performance. Give us a sense of what the audience is going to see.**

I love Jessica Mitrani's universe. She cast me in her previous piece [the film *La Divanee*], and I was amazed by her imagination and her funny way to see art. Her work is very instinctive. Tonight's piece is inspired by the famous journalist Nellie Bly, who traveled around the world. She was a very brave woman. There is a lot of black-and-white multimedia. Yesterday we had the general rehearsal, and I am so in love with it, it's so funny!

**Bly traveled the globe with just the clothes on her back. Do you think you would be able to do that? That's very edited packing...**

When I was little, my dad said I am worldwide and I truly believed that. The only boundaries I see in the world are gastronomic. I don't think we are so different than people who live on the other side of the world. I am a traveling lady, of course.







**The piece also explores feminine archetypes and stereotypes. Tell me more about what sorts of things you touch on.**

This piece about freedom. Nellie had the courage to travel around the world when men said, “You can’t do that. Women need a lot of luggage to travel and you aren’t ready for that.” All these parameters put women in a cage. The limits we experience, we have to break these limits. We need to create ourselves with the feminine side, I don’t like women who have power like [Angela] Merkel. They don’t represent me. We have to find our ways to be free and explore our feminist sides. Women always hold back instead of expressing ourselves.

**What powerful women do you connect with?**

Marina Abramovic, Jessica [Mitrani], and lots of female artists. They are really fighting for a different way to be. Kindness, compassion, and empathy—those are the feelings that really touch other people. For me, art is a therapeutic way to bring beauty to the world and understand ourselves, instead of something like politics. We all have our traumas, and thanks to artistic expression, we can feel better.

**What have you seen lately, either on the Internet, in a magazine, or in real life, that you found truly inspiring?**

Right now I am looking at a lot of the artists of the past. The world moves so quickly these days and we lose real life because we are living in Instagram. This is a great weapon to communicate, I am not saying I am against new tech. We have a great weapon with these technologies. It brings me lots of inspiration, so much creativity. Artists can share their work with the world this way.



Friday, October 10, 2014



**Speaking of artists, you have served as a muse to many great artists and designers, including Jean Paul Gaultier. What was it like to walk in his final show?**

I have known him for 25 years, and he hasn't changed, he's always remained humble. He always loved different people and their shapes. The show was amazing because people expected a retrospective and he didn't need to do that. Instead, we said good-bye with a big, big show.





# STYLE.COM

Friday, October 10, 2014

**You also did quite the performance in Paris at Azzedine Alaïa's party. How did you first meet him?**

They are my lovers, both of them [Alaïa and Gaultier]. I met him 30 years ago at his atelier because I am a big fan of Sophie Theallet and she first started her career with Gaultier and then went to Alaïa. The party in Paris that we just did was so fresh. Usually in the fashion world they have things that are so perfect and practical, and this came from the heart. This was so spontaneous and very Mediterranean.

**What other designers do you admire these days?**

I love Riccardo Tisci, he's a good friend. John Galliano, who is coming back to Margiela, and I am excited to see what he will do with it. Sophie Theallet, Christian Louboutin, and, of course, Threesfour, I love them so much!

**Threesfour did the costumes for tonight. What can you share about those?**

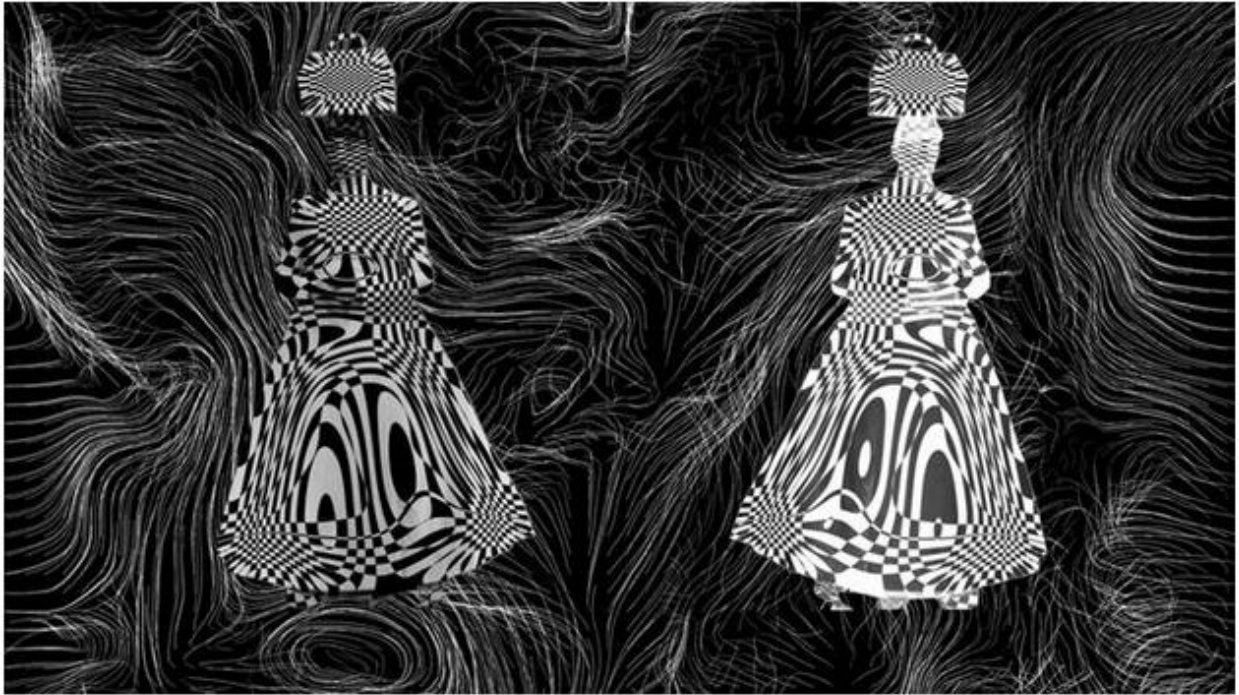
Lots of Nellie Bly type of clothes, like big coats. They made for me a beautiful black silk kimono. The patterns are amazing!

*Traveling Lady runs Friday, October 10 and Saturday, October 11 at 7:30 p.m. at FIAF Florence Gould Hall, 55 East 59th Street.*



# STYLE.COM

Friday, October 10, 2014



*Trends / Fashion: Rossy de Palma - U.S. Stage Debut in New York City*





# PURPLE.FR

Tuesday, October 14, 2014

**purple DIARY – WORLD PREMIERE OF "TRAVELING LADY"  
STARRING ROSSY DE PALMA BY JESSICA MITRANI at FIAF,  
New York**



*Rossy de Palma and Jessica Mitrani*



# PURPLE.FR

Tuesday, October 14, 2014



Angela Donhouse and Lili Gif



Barry de Jove



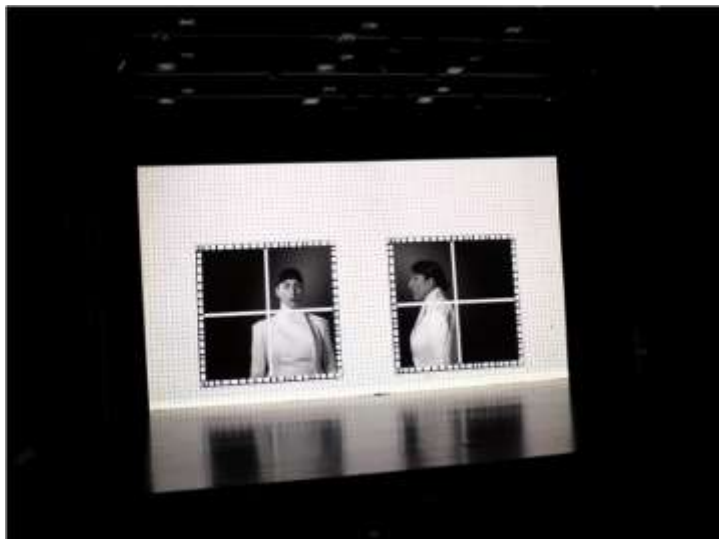
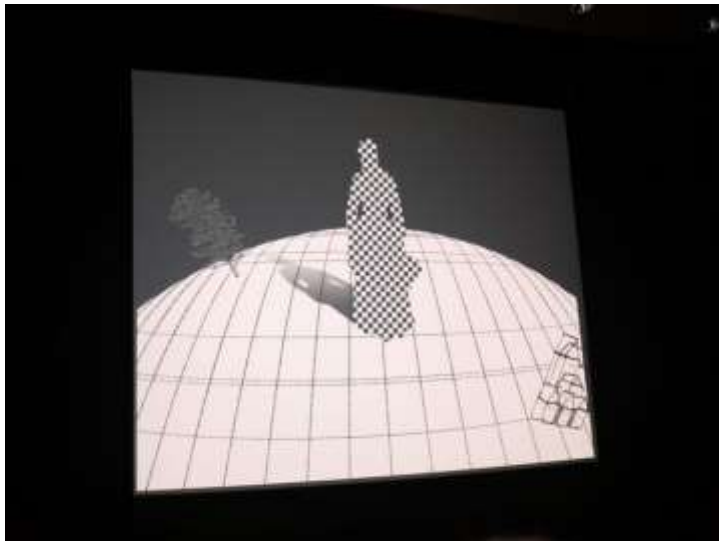


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Tuesday, October 14, 2014



*Photo by [unreadable]*



*Photo by [unreadable]*







# PURPLE.FR

Tuesday, October 14, 2014



Iconic Spanish actress ROSSY DE PALMA makes her US stage debut in the world premiere of JESSICA MITRANI'S "Traveling Lady", co-presented by the *French Institute Alliance Française (FLAF)* and the *Hermès Foundation*. Colombian-born, New York-based visual artist JESSICA MITRANI employs the excessive, the absurd, and the melodramatic to magical-realist effect in audacious works that span performance, video, and sculpture. With "Traveling Lady" she conjures the daring spirit of Nellie Bly, the 19th-century American Journalist who circled the globe in 72 days, carrying little more than the clothes on her back. Part performance, part film, "Traveling Lady" maps a journey at once physical and psychological, earthly and cosmic. DE PALMA plays numerous roles as she challenges social and gender dynamics in a fantastical, subversive world. Costumes were designed by THREEASFOUR fashion collective. *Photo Elise Gallant*



Thursday, October 16, 2014

## Women: Traveling Through Life

*by Debra Winter*



Image of Rossy De Palma in *Traveling Lady*, by Jessica Mitrani; Photo by Sasha Arutyunova

In November 1889, journalist Nellie Bly set out to travel around the world in 80 days. Carrying one small bag, Bly traveled by foot, rail, ship, and rickshaw, and made record time, traveling through England, France, Brindisi, the Suez Canal, Penang, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Japan in just 72 days. Perhaps even more remarkable than her speed is the fact that Bly accomplished this mission on her own at a time when women were not considered competent enough to vote.

Inspired by Bly's journey, the visual artist [Jessica Mitrani](#) explores feminine archetypes in her latest work, *Traveling Lady*, a multimedia piece which premiered at the Florence Gould Hall at FIAF in New York on Friday, October 10, 2014. Mitrani interprets the nostalgic journey metaphorically, expounding on the modes of travel to convey the absurdity of societal misconceptions of a woman's worth, then and now, contrasted by her unlimited potential.





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Mitrani charms us humor, playing upon a barrage of commonly held misogynist views. The piece opens with a black-and-white video collage that portrays, through images, texts on screen, and narration, the resistance Bly endured from her editor to the idea of her traveling around the world. Through narration and text on screen a question is asked: Why is it when men travel they carry luggage, but when women travel it's called baggage? As the video screen raises, revealing a performance stage with a second screen behind, this question sets the stage for the various embedded messages of resistance to imposed feminine archetypes in the performance to follow.

The omniscient narrator is played by a headless Victorian dress. Here, Mitrani cleverly satirizes the late 19th and early 20th-century social convention that women should be seen and not heard by reversing it. On stage there is only an empty dress, though we hear a female voice. The headless dress (and female voice) serves as a host while we embark on the visual journey, featuring video, graphics, words, cutouts and an on-stage performance by Spanish actress Rossy De Palma.

De Palma embodies Bly and stands in for female identity itself. She is everywhere at once. Her live performances include both speaking and singing roles on stage, often adding surly and absurd wit to each scene. De Palma is also in the video behind, and at times she is on stage with the video projected onto her. These moments mark the climax of the piece, and perhaps the most beautiful scene in the entire piece, as the foreground and background become one swirling, dizzying spectacle.

With so many messages appearing at a rapid-fire pace, there is little time to revel in each point singularly; rather, at times, everything blurs into a larger message of a woman's overall worth. The piece is organized into seven vignettes themed as modes of travel. Mitrani's art demonstrates an end goal—to liberate women from a subversive world by her interest in choosing themes of non-movement and movement. In *Traveling Lady*, Mitrani shows all modes of travel, not just traditional ones. She named the vignettes, "Traveling Inside a House," "Traveling Around the Block," "Traveling Across Borders," "Traveling Through Language," "Traveling in Love," and "Traveling Into a Plant." Of these seven, the one that bears the literal feminist stamp is "Traveling Through Language." The audience views a statue of Gertrude Stein on screen while hearing an adaptation of her novel *Ida*, which is narrated in Steinese circular language. The result is cheeky humor combined with the overwhelming gravity of the status quo for women in society.

Woven into the piece is a "Commercial Break," a brassy play on how a character like Bly might be received today. Mitrani shows her as a brand, focusing on the cold cream she was known to travel with and using it to mock the disparaging anti-aging skincare companies that target women, encouraging them to look younger. Again, Mitrani explores another form of travel – women travel through time by aging, while at the same time demonstrating confinement. In a sense women are set up to lose. Society confines women with unrealistic expectations of youth within an inevitable decaying cycle of life.



# ARTS CULTURE BEAT

Thursday, October 16, 2014

This thread is repeated in the final vignette, “Traveling Behind the Mask.” The background is filled with images of the same woman, and the narration tells us to own each and every wrinkle for they are evidence of love and laughter and every emotion we have ever felt. Mitrani demonstrates how these restrictions, which are wholly created by society, travel into women and become a part of them—essentially becoming their mask. The question is how to break away from these false projections and masks women wear.

At times, *Traveling Lady's* message is a giddy psychedelic swirl of hypnotic splendor—everything moves so fast, contrasted with the real-time reality that women’s issues move at an agonizingly slow pace. Women still face many of these same issues today, almost 100 years later.

Tags: [Feminism](#), [film](#), [Jessica Mitrani](#), [Multimedia](#), [Nellie Bly](#), [Rossy de Palma](#), [travel](#), [Traveling Lady](#)